



TOBY KEITH'S
SONGWRITING
HONOR

BRAD PAISLEY
JOINS FORCES
WITH GUINNESS

THIS WEEK'S NASH
FEATURING ELI YOUNG BAND

COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS
MARCH 23, 2015

WHO'S NEXT?

CW takes a look at **Randy Travis**, **Hank Williams Jr.** and a host of others who deserve a shot at the Hall of Fame



WILLIE
NELSON
to star in
new movie

THE
MANDRELL
SISTERS
return to the
stage for
a good
cause

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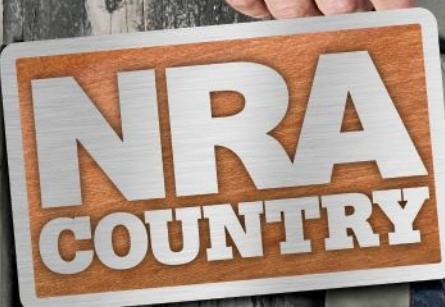


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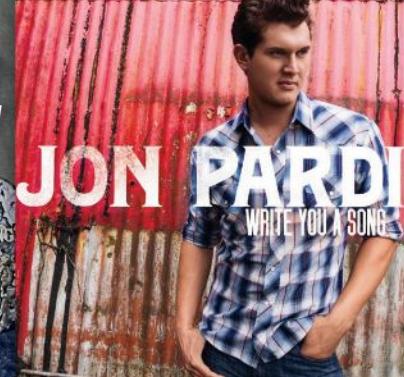
This is NRA Country

“Outside of being on stage, my favorite place to be is outdoors. I grew up in rural Dixon, CA and I’ve been hunting with my father ever since I was a young boy. He taught me how to hunt and shoot, firearm safety and have respect for the outdoors.”

— JON PARDI



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THE HIT LIST



Up Where They Belong

► Hats off to **GARTH BROOKS** and **TRISHA YEARWOOD** for being named hosts of the inaugural ACM Lifting Lives gala in Arlington, Texas, on April 17, two nights before the 50th annual Academy of Country Music Awards show. And they will be doing some serious venue-hopping, alternating between concerts at the Omni Dallas Hotel and the Fort Worth Zoo. ACM Lifting Lives will distribute proceeds from ticket sales to several charities.



Alabama Georgia Line?

▲ At **JASON ALDEAN**'s sold-out Nashville show, he treated fans to a very special moment with one of his biggest musical influences, **ALABAMA**'s **RANDY OWEN**. The pair sang "Tennessee River" and "My Home's in Alabama," making a strong case that those classic country tunes can still work on a big stage all these years later.

Team BS

► **BLAKE SHELTON** and fellow coaches **ADAM LEVINE**, **PHARRELL WILLIAMS** and **CHRISTINA AGUILERA** are back in the saddle again for the eighth season of *The Voice*, which premiered on Feb. 23. Blake is going for an unprecedented fifth coaching championship—which would surpass Bill Belichick's four Super Bowl wins—and he's doing it without deflated balls.



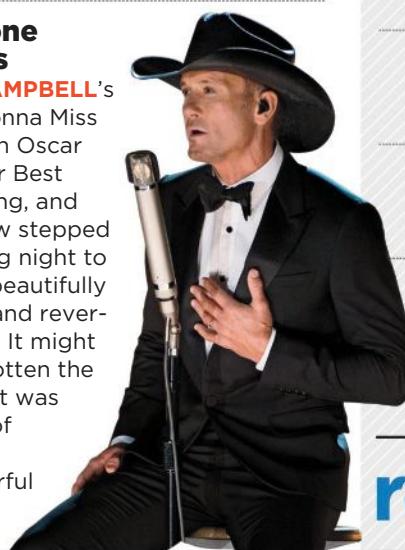
Turn It Up

▼ When you see a song title like "Raise 'Em Up," you can pretty much guess what the song will be about. But kudos to songwriters **JEFFREY STEELE**, **TOM DOUGLAS** and **THE CADILLAC THREE**'s **JAREN JOHNSTON** for co-writing the new **KEITH URBAN/ERIC CHURCH** duet. While it does reference trucks in the opening verse, the song's lyrical content cuts deep with themes of patriotism and family.



Rhinestone Cowboys

► **GLEN CAMPBELL**'s "I'm Not Gonna Miss You" was an Oscar nominee for Best Original Song, and Tim McGraw stepped in on the big night to perform a beautifully restrained and reverent version. It might not have gotten the Oscar, but it was easily one of the show's most powerful moments.



THE JUKEBOX

Essential songs from the artists featured in this issue!

Randy Travis

"Diggin' Up Bones"
"Forever and Ever, Amen"

Hank Williams Jr.

"Family Tradition"
"Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound"

Eli Young Band

"Turn It On"

Kenny Chesney with Grace Potter

"Wild Child"

Trisha Yearwood

"I Remember You"

Craig Campbell

"Keep Them Kisses Comin'"

Brett Eldredge

"Mean to Me"

Randy Houser

"Like a Cowboy"

Ira Dean

"Nothin' to Do Round Here"

Barbara Mandrell

"Sleeping Single in a Double Bed"

Allison Moorer

"Down to Believing"

Feufollet

"Tired of Your Tears"

rdio

Look for this
Country Weekly
playlist on **rdio**!

COVER STORY

44

Fame Worthy

We're inching closer to a special time in Nashville, when the new inductees to the Country Music Hall of Fame will be announced. We've come up with our own list of possibilities and make the case for several who just might hear their name called. Who'll be the next in line?

**22 | Allison Moorer**

It all comes *Down to Believing* on her new album, written during a time of turmoil.

24 | Mandrell Sisters

Barbara, Louise and Irlene Mandrell return to the stage for a doggone worthy fundraiser.

50 | Hottest Bachelor

It's time to cast your vote for the hottest hunk in country music.

52 | Cruisin' Country

Fun-loving stars made the Country Music Cruise a first-class trip for fans.

56 | Tortuga Festival

The Fort Lauderdale fest mixes music with an environmental message.

58 | Craig Campbell

Signing with a new label marks a major turning point for the "Keep Them Kisses Comin'" singer.

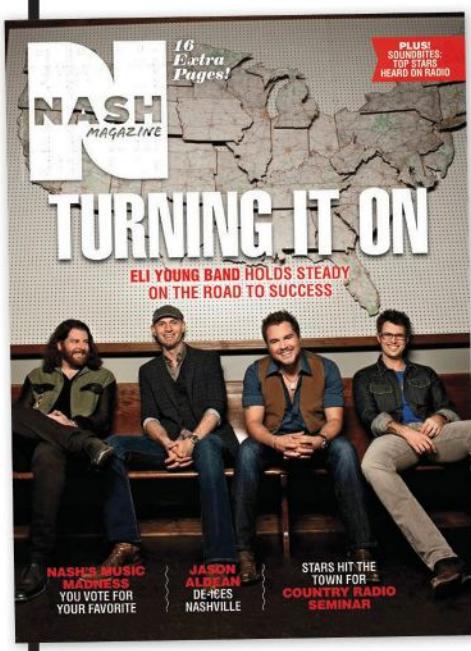
62 | Ira Dean

The former Trick Pony member's latest album features an all-star vocal collaboration.

64 | James McMurtry

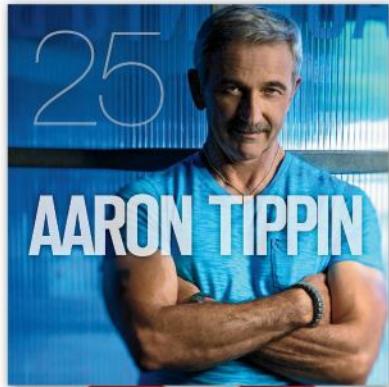
Social commentary weaves its way into the singer/songwriter's new album.

DEPARTMENTS



27 NASH

The Eli Young Band came out of Texas with a mission and big dreams. Now that they've found success, the foursome is determined to hold on to it. Plus, Jason Aldean kept the fires burning with a show in Nashville that warmed up a chilly winter night. And get the highlights from Country Radio Seminar week in Nashville.



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Randy Houser.

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[LETTERS]



Dear Readers:

As we were deciding on our cover feature for this week, we were debating a number of stories we found interesting. But one stuck out. With the Country Music Hall of Fame announcements coming in (usually) April, we got on the subject of those artists who are *not* in the Hall of Fame. The list is long, and even we couldn't believe how many have not made it into the Hall yet. We decided to pick five outstanding performers who would qualify as Modern Era inductees this year. And yes, we know you might not agree with our choices, but we'd love to hear your stance on other eligible candidates. Send your thoughts to letters@countryweekly.com. But first, check out the cover story on page 44, where our writers make cases for **RANDY TRAVIS, HANK WILLIAMS JR., RICKY SKAGGS, BROOKS & DUNN** and **ALAN JACKSON**.

In this week's *NASH*, we hang out with the guys in the **ELI YOUNG BAND**. Upon the release of their new single, we wanted to catch up on all things Eli Young. We also continue our Music Madness contest, so be sure and go to *Country-Weekly.com* and vote. And we take you inside Country Radio Seminar, featuring all your favorite stars, and so much more.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands March 23, as we kick off the highly anticipated Big Revival Tour with **KENNY CHESNEY**.

See you next week!

LISA KONICKI, *Editor in Chief*

Tell Us What YOU Think!

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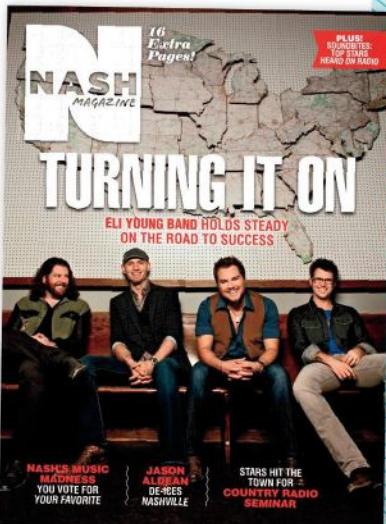
Thank you so much for putting Reba on the cover [Comeback Queen, Jan. 26]. I have been a longtime *Country Weekly* subscriber. There is no one like her, and I love her so much.

— DOROTHY FINN
Winchendon, Mass.

READER SUGGESTION

What I would like to see is a small section titled "Where Are They Now?" Just feature one person a week. Also, what about a book section? This would feature one or two books about country artists—memoirs, bios or self-written fiction. Thank you for considering.

— DENNIS COON



MAKING A CHOICE

In response to the letter by David Harrison regarding country songs referencing drinking, smoking dope, cussing and sex [Letters, Feb. 23], this is so true. We don't need to listen to it, and we don't. We have been country fans for decades, listening to Roy Acuff, Ray Price, Tom T. Hall, Roy Clark, Buck Owens, George Jones, then graduating to George Strait, Reba, Dolly, Alan Jackson, Vince Gill, Josh Turner, The Oak Ridge Boys and Faith and Tim. Today, there are artists like Carrie Underwood and Lady Antebellum who have good songs. If the younger generation chooses Blake Shelton, Luke Bryan, Dierks Bentley, Jason Aldean and Florida Georgia Line, that's their choice. We have the privilege of making our own decisions. Just keep searching for the good ones, David.

— PHIL & RUBY DOROSH
Shippensburg, Pa.

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COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS

THE BIG PICTURE

a turn my enemies into friends..

This song we'll play

We'll sing in a beautiful day

Your
Music
Rocks

PLAYING MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS

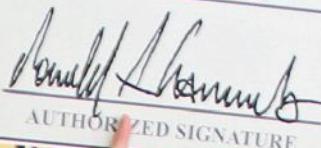
little kids
ROCK



Kids Rock

DATE Feb. 18, 2015

\$150,000


Rascal Flatts
AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE



CHECK 'EM OUT

In the eyes of a group of school children, RASCAL FLATTS really rocks. On Feb. 18, the superstar trio visited Miramonte Elementary School in Los Angeles to announce the awarding of a CMA Foundation grant of \$150,000 to the national organization Little Kids Rock, which donates teacher training, musical instruments and other resources to public schools facing budget cuts.

the mix

ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE STARS OF COUNTRY—AND THEN SOME!

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Make Yourself at Home

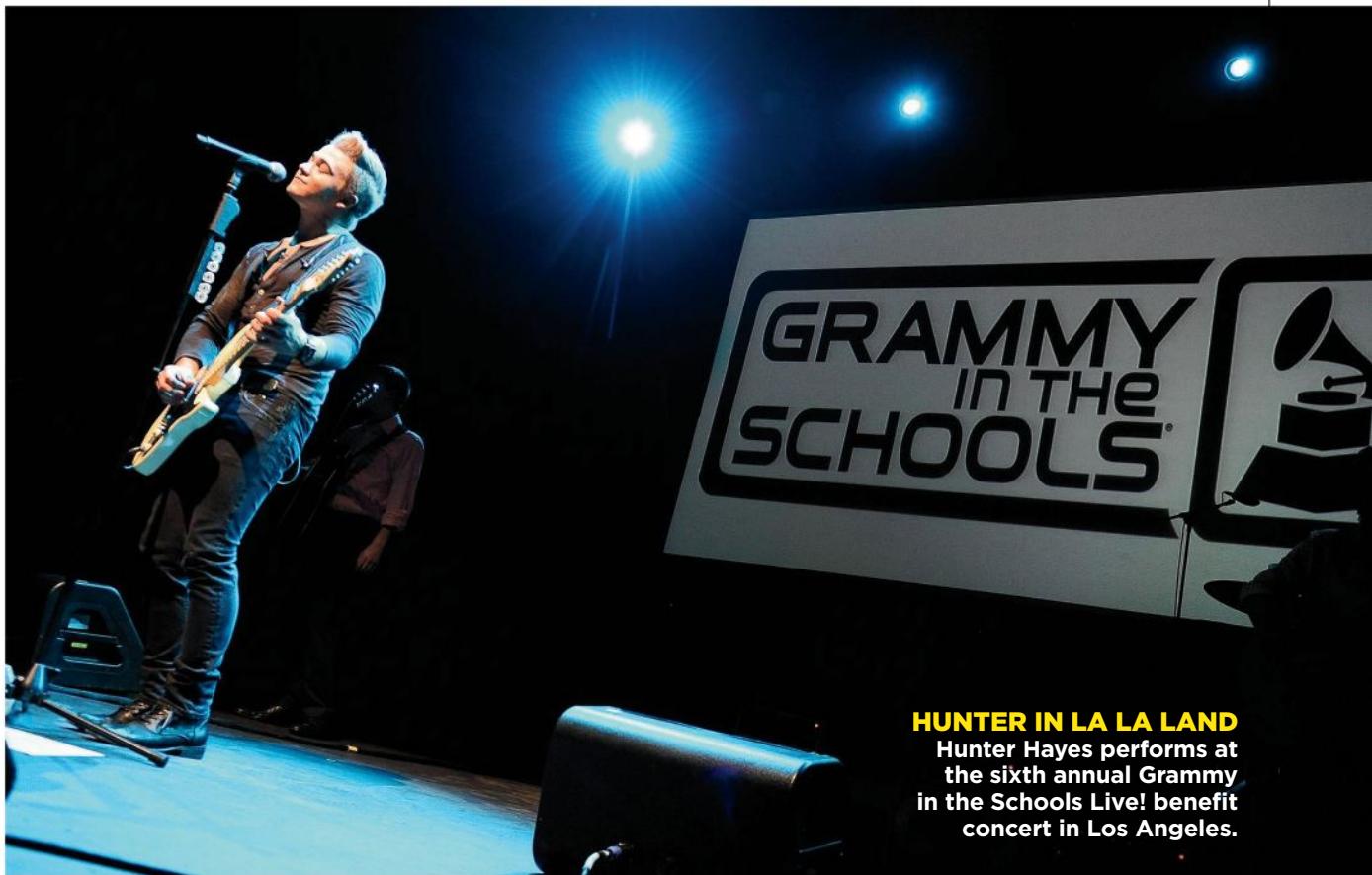
If the heart of a home is the kitchen, **TRISHA YEARWOOD** knows a thing or two about how to make a house a home since writing three cookbooks. But home goes beyond the kitchen in the abode she shares with Garth Brooks, as well as in her new line of furniture through Klaussner Home Furnishings. The Trisha Yearwood Home Collection features pieces for the entire home that are reflective of Trisha's own warm and welcoming personality. The collection makes its debut April 18.

HOT SHOTS!



TEAMMATES FOR KIDS

Garth Brooks teams with members of the Atlanta Falcons for the ProCamps Worldwide football clinic for Atlanta-area children.

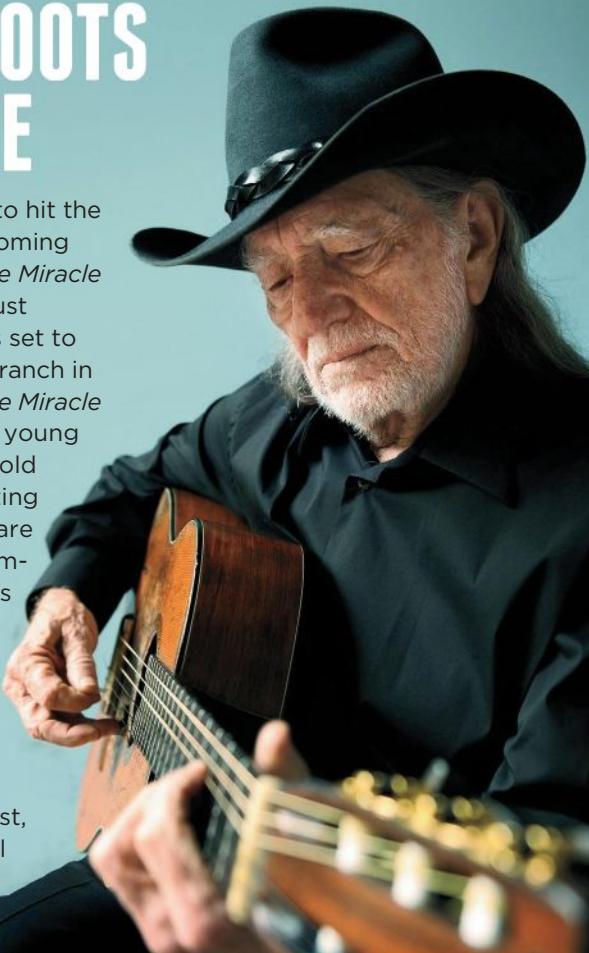


HUNTER IN LA LA LAND

Hunter Hayes performs at the sixth annual Grammy in the Schools Live! benefit concert in Los Angeles.

WILLIE SHOOTS NEW MOVIE

WILLIE NELSON is about to hit the big screen again in an upcoming movie titled *Waiting for the Miracle to Come*. Production has just begun on the film, which is set to be shot on Willie's private ranch in Luck, Texas. *Waiting for the Miracle to Come* centers around a young woman whose quest for gold leads her to some fascinating characters. Among those are a retired vaudeville performer, played by Willie, and his wife, who will be played by acclaimed actress Charlotte Rampling. Newcomer Sophie Lowe co-stars as the young woman. Another musical superstar, U2's lead vocalist, Bono, is writing an original song for the movie, which Willie will perform.



SONGWRITERS HALL CALLS TOBY KEITH

TOBY KEITH's songwriting prowess is sometimes overlooked, but the Songwriters Hall of Fame has obviously been paying close attention. Toby will become one of the newest members of the Songwriters Hall during its annual induction event on June 18 in New York City. He'll be joined by another country stalwart, **BOBBY BRADDOCK**, whose credits include **GEORGE JONES'** "He Stopped Loving Her Today" and **TRACY LAWRENCE'** "Time Marches On." Also in the induction class are Cyndi Lauper, Grateful Dead songwriting team

Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter, blues icon Willie Dixon and pop composer Linda Perry. "I am honored to be in the Songwriters Hall of Fame," Toby said upon learning the news. "It means the world to me and it is the only award that I will display on my desk."

MUSICAL NOTES

BABY NEWS

▼ **ERIC CHURCH** and wife Katherine welcomed son Tennessee Hawkins Church on Feb. 15. The couple also has an older son, 3-year-old Boone McCoy Church.



LOGAN MIZE and wife Jill welcomed daughter Violet Raye on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14.

▼ **CLARA HENNINGSSEN** of The Henningsens and husband Jacob Calaway celebrated Valentine's Day on Feb. 14 with the birth of their first child, son **LOUIE CANNON CALAWAY**.

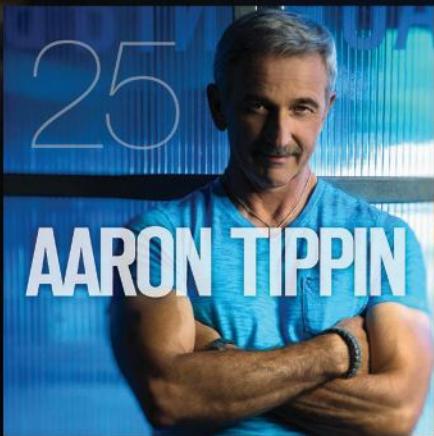


Panning for Gold

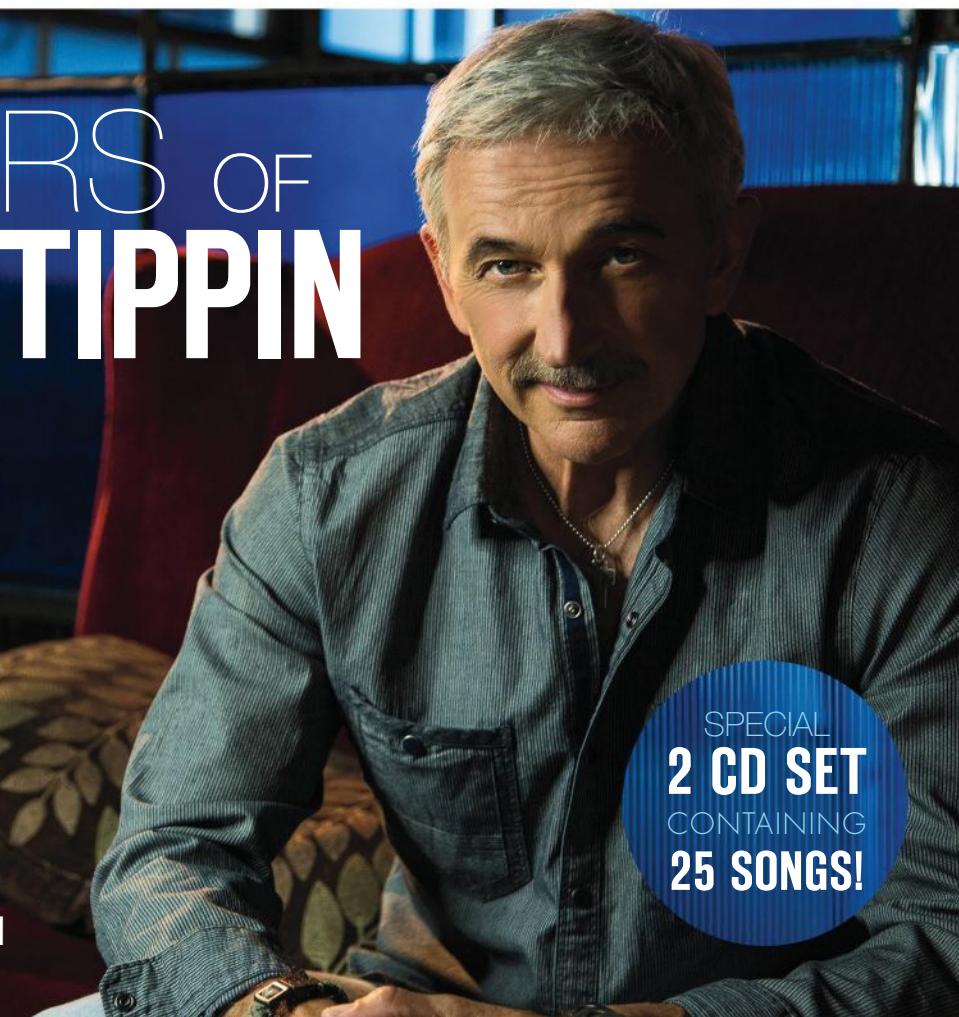
Ask any country artist and they'll tell you, "It's all about the song." So, from March 24 to 28 in Nashville, **TIN PAN SOUTH** celebrates the hearts and souls behind the hits: the songwriters. Held annually in Nashville, Tin Pan is the world's biggest songwriter festival, and this year it's bigger and brighter than ever with singer-songwriters like **VINCE GILL**, **LADY ANTEBELLUM**'s **HILLARY SCOTT**, **BRANDY CLARK**, **CRAIG CAMPBELL**, **JOSH THOMPSON**, **CASEY JAMES**, **CHUCK WICKS** and **CHARLIE WORSHAM** in the lineup, along with songwriters like **SHANE McANALLY**, **BRETT JAMES**, **CHRIS DeSTEFANO**, **NATALIE HEMBY** and **LUKE LAIRD**. If you're interested in attending, go to *tinpansouth.com* for tickets.



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Hold My Beer & Listen to This

It's been 15 years in the making. Texas superstars **WADE BOWEN** and **RANDY ROGERS** have been pals for that long, even solidifying their friendship with their annual Hold My Beer and Watch This Tour through Texas. If you've never had the good fortune to attend one of these shows, you can at least experience the music at home when the *Hold My Beer, Vol. 1* album comes out on April 20. The 10-song collection, which includes a cover of Merle Haggard's "Reasons to Quit," showcases all that is good about beer, bars and buddies.



HEAVY HITTERS

Texas troupe **RECKLESS KELLY** is hosting their annual Celebrity Softball Jam on May 31 at Dell Diamond in Round Rock, Texas, and not only is it a genuinely fun day of ball, it's also a great day of music with more than 20 performers on two different stages. Some of the artists who have signed on so far include Cody Canada & The Departed, Charlie Robison, Kyle Parks and Shinyribs. Oh, it gets even better! Money raised at the event benefits Austin-area youth sports programs. General admission tickets are available at rkcsj.org.



Musical Notes CONTINUED

TOUR

▼ **KENNY CHESNEY** will kick off The Big Revival Tour with two shows at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville on March 26 and 27. **JAKE OWEN** and **CHASE RICE** are the opening acts for both shows.



▼ EMILY WEST

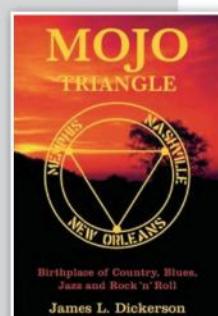
will play a series of residency shows at clubs in New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles. Her first show takes place at Subculture in New York on April 2.



BOOKS

In his new book, **MOJO TRIANGLE: BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY, BLUES, JAZZ AND ROCK 'N' ROLL**, author **JAMES L. DICKERSON** contends that Natchez, Miss., was the center of American music. According to James, American music began when slaves came in contact with Native American music, which was later influenced by the music of white settlers.

Natchez doesn't get the credit, James says, because the city did not develop a recording industry. The book is available at Amazon and other retailers.



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• WARREN ZEVON

On his 2002 compilation album, *Reprise, Please, Baby*, Dwight duets with Flaco Jiménez on Warren Zevon's "Carmelita." In 2003, Dwight provided background vocals on Warren's last album, *The Wind*, which also featured Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne and Tom Petty.



• THE BLASTERS

Fixtures of the 1980s L.A. punk rock scene, The Blasters took struggling newcomer Dwight on tour as their opening act. Dwight later found success recording "Long White Cadillac," which was written by Blasters co-founder Dave Alvin.



• BUCK OWENS

Dwight cites Bakersfield Sound pioneer Buck Owens as one of his biggest influences. The two teamed up for a duet on 1988's "Streets of Bakersfield," which became Buck's first No. 1 single in 16 years. In 2007, Dwight released *Dwight Sings Buck*, a 15-song tribute album.



• BILLY BOB THORNTON

Dwight co-starred as Doyle Hargraves in the 1996 film *Sling Blade*, which Billy Bob Thornton wrote, directed and starred in. In 2000, Billy Bob returned the favor and co-starred in *South of Heaven, West of Hell*, a film Dwight wrote, directed and starred in.

DWIGHT YOAKAM



Not only is he a singer, songwriter, musician and actor, but Dwight is also one helluva boot-scooter. Where did this jack-of-all-trades acquire such a repertoire of skills? His Circle of Influence can help answer this query.

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE



• BECK

Dwight's 2012 critically acclaimed album, *3 Pears*, included collaborations with Beck, Kid Rock and Ashley Monroe. Beck produced two songs on the album, "A Heart Like Mine" and "Missing Heart," while Kid Rock and Ashley tackled co-writes on "Take Hold of My Hand" and "It's Never Alright," respectively.



• ELVIS PRESLEY

Elvis' dance moves aren't the only thing Dwight has borrowed from the King on-stage. Dwight also has recorded a number of Elvis' hits, including "Mystery Train," "Little Sister" and "Suspicious Minds."



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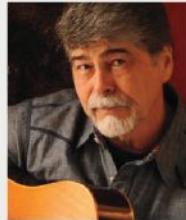
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FINDING MEANING

THE HEAT MAY HAVE BEEN getting to Brett Eldredge during a summer writing appointment as he sat in Scooter Carusoe's office on Music Row with busted air conditioning. "We were sweating," says Brett. "We had the hottest songwriting room in the world!"

But rather than calling it a day, the two decided to tough it out a bit longer to see what ideas they could come up with, as Brett was preparing to put the finishing touches on his debut album. Brett was playing a groove on his guitar to help keep his mind off the heat. "I kind of got lost doing it," Brett recalls. "It had this romantic vibe."

Once Scooter realized Brett was on to something, he began to spit out random lyrics to bring the groove to life. "We started coming up with these descriptive things of how much somebody means to you," says Brett. "We started rambling back and forth. I had this line, and he had that line."

Scooter was concentrating on what he was coming up with, but

also keeping an open ear to everything that was coming out of Brett's mouth. When Brett sang the words *I'd be what you mean to me*, the light bulb went off in Scooter's head. They found the perfect hook to their

romantic song.

At the time, Brett was looking for that "special person" to complete his personal life, so tapping into the emotion of writing about what he wanted to have and how much he wanted to mean to that person came naturally. "When I meet that person, they are going to be my world, and I am going to give my world to them," Brett says. "I just want to be half as special as they will be to me."

Once "Mean to Me" was finished, Brett recorded the song for his debut album, *Bring Me Back*. After two chart-topping hits, the romantic ballad was released and reached No. 4 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart.

"It's so cool when I think back on everything that's happened with this song," Brett says, smiling. "That day it was just me and him in the room. Now fast-forward, you've got thousands of people singing this love song that we created, holding lighters in the air and their phones are lit up every single night. That's cool."

— ALANNA CONAWAY

"MEAN TO ME"

↑ **Performed by**
Brett Eldredge



→ **Written by**
Brett Eldredge
Scooter Carusoe

SCOOT-ING UP

Scooter Carusoe has penned songs for a number of artists, including Lady Antebellum, David Nail and Kenny Chesney. Scooter reached the top of the charts with Kenny's "Anything but Mine" in 2005 and "Better as a Memory" in 2008.

BEVERLY HILLS PAWN



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Festival Frenzy

Your three-day passes are purchased, your travel plans have been made and the boss knows that you'll be indisposed for a few days of great music and star-spotting. Now it's time to stock up on all the essentials that will make your favorite country music festival comfortable, without sacrificing your style. Beyond T-shirts, shorts and sundresses, we have some trendy and classic suggestions to help make the most of your festival experience, no matter where it is. — **TAMMY RAGUSA**



An umbrella can be itty bitty, but still protect you from a big summer rain.

Totes Holiday Lites

\$28 | macys.com



Nash/Country Weekly deputy editor **JIM CASEY** says nude beaches, fly-fishing and music fests are the only acceptable times to wear a fanny pack.

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\$16.99 | overstock.com



For the ladies, protect your face and even your shoulders from the sun and keep your noggin cool with a super-wide-brim straw hat.

San Diego Hat Company Ultrabraid Sun Hat (in various colors)

\$44 | zappos.com



For the fellas, when in Rome ... or when in Nashville.

Sonoma Life + Style Cowboy Hat

\$22 | kohls.com





STOKES NIELSON from NASH TV says you must have a great camping chair. His favorite has a handy cup-holder in the arm. Check this one out.

REI Camp X Chair
\$39.50 | rei.com



Nash/Country Weekly art director **CHRIS ALLEN** suggests a comfortable shoe because "you will be walking." He wore a hiker on his last trip to Bonnaroo, and boy, do these look great.

Merrell Rockbit Cove
\$84.95 | cabelas.com



Knapsacks are back and hipper than ever, and this one has a compartment for everything.

Urban Edge Canvas Twill and Leather Flapover Backpack

\$93.99 | overstock.com



You never know when a cloud will appear, so gents should have a packable jacket ready.

Columbia Hydro-Tech Rain Jacket
\$60 | amazon.com

Your backpack can say a lot about your personality, and Sakroots has a print to suit yours.

Sakroots Flap Backpack

\$79 | macy's.com



Country artist and America's Morning Show's **CHUCK WICKS'** necessary item is a cooler to keep his adult beverages perfectly chilled. We like this one.

Mountainsmith Deluxe Cooler Cube
\$49.95 | mountainsmith.com

RAISING THE BAR

GUINNESS AND
BRAD PAISLEY
UNITE TO HELP
FIREFIGHTERS FOR
ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

AS THE FESTIVE ST. PATRICK'S

Day approaches on March 17, Guinness is asking folks to raise more than a glass of the Irish dry stout. They're also encouraging you to help raise money in support of firefighters around the country.

Guinness is releasing a series of limited-edition firefighter-inspired T-shirts, one designed in collaboration with Brad Paisley, as a tribute to



these everyday heroes. Brad, as many fans know, comes from a family of firefighters, including his dad and brother-in-law. These shirts will be available through St. Patrick's Day at guinnessgivesback.com.

And if you thought Guinness was strictly for imbibing, check out this recipe for Guinness-braised short ribs, one of many dishes you can prepare with the popular brew.

— BOB PAXMAN

Parts Unknown

CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY WITH THIS GUINNESS-INSPIRED DRINK.

1½ ounces Ron Zacapa rum
 ½ ounce lemon juice
 ¾ ounce Crème de Cassis
 ¼ ounce Orgeat (sweet syrup)
 Guinness Draught

COMBINE first four ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice. **SHAKE** vigorously and **STRAIN** over fresh ice in a highball glass. Top with Guinness Draught. (Guinness urges you to please drink responsibly.)

Guinness-Braised Short Ribs

YIELDS 12 SHORT RIBS

12 (1½-pounds) bone-in short ribs (Ribs vary in size, so cook times may differ slightly.)

Salt and pepper to taste
2 carrots, diced
2 onions, diced

4 sticks celery, diced
2 cans Guinness Draught beer
2 gallons beef stock
2 cups tomato juice
4 sprigs of thyme

SEASON short ribs with salt and pepper. Pan **SEAR** short ribs in medium to hot canola oil. When the meat is seared to an amber brown color, transfer to roasting pan. In the same pan,

sauté carrots, onions and celery and transfer to roasting pan. Deglaze pan with Guinness beer and **POUR** liquid over the short ribs.

ADD beef stock, tomato juice and thyme to roasting pan, **COVER** with foil. **BRAISE** at 350° for 2 to 2½ hours. The short ribs will slightly pull away from the bone when cooked. **REMOVE** short ribs

from roasting pan and cool. **STRAIN** liquid and divide in half. **REDUCE** half the liquid in a saucepan over heat to create a sauce. **SIMMER** remaining liquid with short ribs until tender, approximately 15 minutes. **SPOON** sauce over your short ribs and serve with horseradish mashed potatoes and sautéed Brussels sprout leaves.



GOOD FAITH

ALLISON MOORER WEATHERS THE STORMS ON HER NEW ALBUM.

BELIEF IS A FUNDAMENTAL

component of success when it comes to anything, whether it's a marriage, a job or even something as ephemeral as writing music. If you can't believe in those things the way you used to, then it's incredibly difficult—if not outright impossible—to carry on doing them.

That idea was the basis of singer/songwriter Allison Moorer's new album, *Down to Believing*, which was written and recorded during a time of great change and turmoil in her life. Shortly after her 2010 album, *Crows*, was released, Allison took a break from music to give birth to her son, John Henry Earle, who was later diagnosed with autism. More recently, Allison separated from husband (and John Henry's father) Steve Earle after nearly 10 years of marriage. Those huge life adjustments formed the crux of *Down to Believing*, propelled by Allison's determination to keep writing new songs.

"The idea that I had was that you wake up every day and you work at it because that's what it requires," she explains. "And when you wake up and realize that you can't believe in it anymore, you have a decision to make. So it's about moving on, in a way, if you can't believe, because at the end of the day that's what you have to be able to do."

As she was grappling with John Henry's diagnosis and taking care of him, Allison was also grappling with her next step in music. Recording and touring seemed like pretty far-fetched concepts at that time, but there was one thing she could do at home: apply a workmanlike approach to her craft.

"I've always tried to concentrate on songwriting, but I knew that it was really the one part of my career that I could

hold on to, being a mom to a child that needed to be in one place," explains Allison. "That was the trajectory that I took."

Out of this period emerged the songs that would eventually form *Down to Believing*, including the gnarled rocker "Mama Let the Wolf In." In that one, Allison addresses John Henry's autism, personifying the disorder as a menacing intruder and getting worked up enough to call it a big, bad mother-you-know-what.

"I think that probably shocks people to hear that come out of my mouth in a song, but really, I could think of no better way to describe the beast that is autism," explains Allison, who recorded *Down to Believing* with her longtime producer, Kenny Greenberg. "It's really about being confounded, not being able to figure out how it happened and then

the guilt that comes along with not being able to protect your child."

At the request of her label, E1, Allison included a cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Have You Ever Seen the Rain," which fits in thematically with her meditations on change and relationships, like the acoustic "Blood," dedicated to her sister, Shelby Lynne. Allison addresses change and turmoil—including her split with Steve—even more directly in "Like It Used to Be" and "Thunderstorm Hurricane."

"The five years that have gone by since I last released a record have held a lot of change. Life is always about change," she says. "That's the one thing we can count on. That's what 'Like It Used to Be' is about—getting with that, sort of saying if you can't get with it you're in trouble, because it's coming. So accept it, deal with it and move forward. Don't try to hang on so tightly."

Allison is clearly listening to her own advice. The muscular grooves and soulful ballads on *Down to Believing* are a complete departure from the quiet folk songs of 2010's *Crows*, and still worlds away from her brush with mainstream country radio acceptance in the '90s. To hear her tell it, she would go crazy if she didn't push herself to try something new. That's where this idea of belief is of the utmost importance.

"To repeatedly make the same thing over and over, that's got to be not very exciting after a while," she asserts.

"I'm interested in life. I'm interested in learning, and because of that I take different paths all the time and just feel really lucky that I've been able to do that and still create music."

— JON FREEMAN



LIFE IS ALWAYS ABOUT CHANGE. THAT'S THE ONE THING WE CAN COUNT ON."



Soul Sisters

BARBARA, LOUISE and IRENE MANDRELL return to the stage to help four-legged friends find their own families.

STORY BY ALANNA CONAWAY | PHOTOS BY AMIEE STUBBS



The Mandrell sisters flank Christine Gibson, a frequent extra on TV's *Nashville*, and her pug Waylon.



(Above, from left) Barbara, Irene and Louise welcome both two-legged and four-legged guests to Unleashed.



NASHVILLE'S POSH Hutton Hotel generally wouldn't be the kind of place you'd expect to find a pack of dogs, but it was another story when the building hosted the fifth annual Unleashed: Dinner With Your Dog—A Family Affair on Jan. 31. Put on by the Nashville Humane Association, the event aimed to help canines housed at the facility find forever homes.

Making this year's event extra special was the reunion of the Mandrell sisters—Barbara, Louise and Irene—who have not shared the stage in nearly 30 years. When Barbara retired from performing in 1997, Irene and Louise followed their own career paths, but adding a few dogs to the mix opened up a whole world of possibilities.

"We all have animals and love animals," Louise told *Country Weekly* backstage with her sisters as they

took turns holding a puppy. "And it's been a bonus being backstage here and playing with all these sweet dogs."

The event itself is nothing new to Barbara, who hosted Unleashed last year with her daughter Jaime. When she was approached once again to participate, Barbara decided to up the excitement by suggesting getting her sisters involved. "I told them not only is it rare, but it never happens because I'm retired and both of my sisters are not, so they're busy working," Barbara explained. "I said if Louise is free and if Irene is free, it would be really cool if the three of us could do this because we haven't been together since *Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters* on NBC. I knew they would if their schedule allowed, and it did, so here we are!"

The event featured a red-carpet

welcoming for the four-legged guests of honor, as well as a fashion show where the dogs could potentially find a family interested in adopting. All three sisters were particularly moved by this part. For Barbara and her husband, Ken, their pets are an extension of their family. "They are a member of our family. They are with us until death do us part," Barbara said. "They bring such joy and humor, and they are the closest thing to unconditional love that there is. They love us no matter if we're smart or stupid, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, mean or nice. It's a very precious gift. So any time I can help the Nashville Humane Association, I will."

"They are so good with their animals, too" added Irene. "It is just such a beautiful experience to be around that atmosphere at the Nashville Humane Association."



Louise, Barbara and Irlene share the spotlight with some of the hairy and less-hairy models.

"It's almost like a pet store," Irlene continues, "because when you walk in, the way it's designed and laid out, you can take your children there and it's fun. There's a place out back that you can not only walk your animals around, but also a play area where you can throw balls and play with the animals and things like that. They are just so good with them."

As they stepped into the spotlight from the stage of the hotel's Grand Ballroom, the sisters picked up right where they left off, with their charismatic personalities and superstar presence captivating the room. Unfortunately, a full-time reunion of the Mandrell sisters as a performing act down the road is highly unlikely, due mainly to the fact that Barbara has been enjoying retirement and time with her growing family.

Just this past October, Barbara and Ken became grandparents with the birth of Jaime's son, James, whom they call Jax. Louise has also

been enjoying the grandmother role with her granddaughter, Larkin, born in January 2013.

Since Larkin's birth, Louise has taken time off from working to help make sure the child has the foundation of family established very early on. "I really think day care is a good thing, but when they're that young, I think it's nice to have a grandmother to take care of you and teach you," Louise said, who will return to the road next year. "I wanted her to learn how to get up and enjoy life and work and help others. She loves helping others," she added with a grin, "although it's a lot more trouble when she helps because she just turned 2!"

While there are no grandchildren in Irlene's life just yet, she says that could change very soon. "My youngest daughter, Christina, is getting married in May, so maybe in a couple of years I'll get to be a grandmama," said Irlene. "Right now, I just love being able to see

Barbara and Louise's grandbabies, because they are adorable!"

In the meantime, Irlene is putting the finishing touches on a new album dedicated to the military, which has her working alongside her producer-engineer fiancé Pat Holt. "We've known each other a long time, and we just reconnected," she added. "It's great!"

As far as music for Barbara, she says it is still very much in the forefront of her life, only in a different context these days. "I don't miss the music because even when I'm working out in my garden, I have speakers blasting with music going," she said, laughing. "I've just been enjoying being a regular person—cooking and keeping up a house, having a great life with my husband and watching what I want on television. I worked for over 38 years, so I just thank God for the career I had because the fans have left me with just the most beautiful memories." **CW**



PHOTO BY KRISTINEARLOVE/HBPR

**16
Extra
Pages!**

**PLUS!
SOUNDBITES:
TOP STARS
HEARD ON RADIO**

TURNING IT ON

**ELI YOUNG BAND HOLDS STEADY
ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS**



**NASH'S MUSIC
MADNESS**
YOU VOTE FOR
YOUR FAVORITE

**JASON
ALDEAN**
DE-ICES
NASHVILLE

**STARS HIT THE
TOWN FOR**
**COUNTRY RADIO
SEMINAR**

ON THE RADIO

Country radio is still an integral component of bringing new music to fans, so Country Radio Seminar, which was held Feb. 25-27 in Nashville, is an annual opportunity to learn about the challenges and successes of the industry. It's also a pretty excellent place to hear the hottest new sounds in country music, with sanctioned showcases like the Grand Ole Opry show that took place at the Nashville Convention Center and featured Lady Antebellum, Lee Brice and others, or the highly coveted New Faces show, which closed the week with Eric Paslay, Frankie Ballard, Maddie & Tae, Sam Hunt and Cole Swindell. Additionally, numerous after-hours performances are to be had, like one by Dierks Bentley's '90s throwback band Hot Country Knights, or a pop-up Garth Brooks show at Marathon Music Works, the annual Sony Nashville Boat Show aboard the General Jackson and even a glorious midnight Keith Urban show at the Ryman Auditorium. 'Til next year!



(From left) John King, Kelsea Ballerini, Ronnie Milsap and Craig Morgan have a laugh.



Jana Kramer and The Swon Brothers



**Trisha
Yearwood
(left) and
Miranda
Lambert**



Frankie Ballard
rips through a
guitar solo at
the New Faces
show.

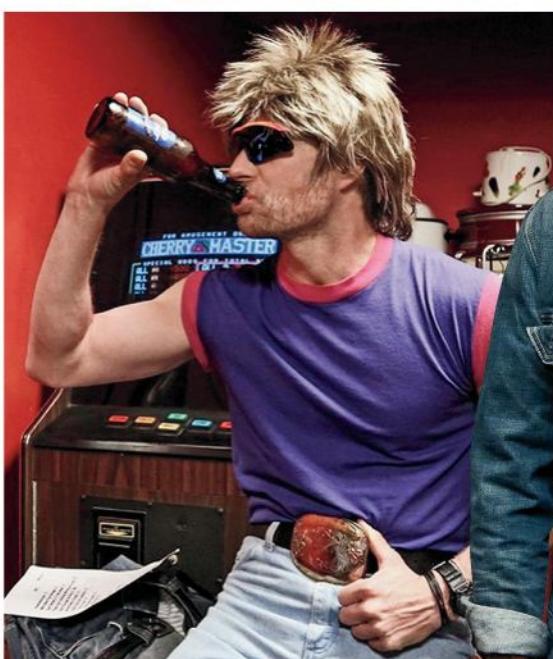
Stars gathered at the Palm restaurant for the Legendary Lunch, including Lee Greenwood, Sylvia, The Oak Ridge Boys, John Conlee, Jim Ed Brown, T. Graham Brown, Deborah Allen and many others.



Lady Antebellum took it "Freestyle" for a special Opry show.



Dierks Bentley relived the '90s as the leader of Hot Country Knights, playing covers of '90s hits to a packed house at The Stage and bringing out guests (clockwise from below left) Miranda Lambert, Randy Houser, Charles Kelley and Kip Moore.



Keith Urban played a stripped-down midnight show at the Ryman.

CRS CONTINUED



Songwriter Rhett Akins (right) shines during a CRS panel.



(Clockwise from above) Maddie & Tae play the New Faces show; RaeLynn sings for the Opry crowd; Sam Hunt belts out one of his tunes; Cole Swindell works the New Faces crowd; Chase Bryant lets loose on the Opry stage.



The Sony Nashville Boat Show on the General Jackson closed with a special performance by rock group Cheap Trick, who got a little assistance on guitar from Brad Paisley.

RHETT AND SAM BY MARY SATTERLEE/ARISTOPR; CHASE AND RAE LYNN BY CHRIS HOLLOW/HOLLOPHOTOGRAPHICS; GRAND OLE OPRY/BRAD & CHEAP TRICK BY ALAN POIZNER/SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE; COLE AND M&T BY AMIEE STUBBS

CONNECT WITH THE PASSION OF COUNTRY

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COUNTRY FOR LIFE

FRESH BRAKES

ELI YOUNG BAND SERVES UP SOME BRAND-
NEW TUNES FOR THEIR HUNGRY FANS.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA





Eli Young Band
lights up the *Today*
show studio.

THE WAIT FOR NEW MUSIC FROM YOUR

favorite country artist can seem eternal, can't it? Imagine how it feels for the artists, who sometimes experience three-year gaps between album releases. Eli Young Band knows that feeling of waiting all too well, so they are shortening the gap with an EP of new tunes just one year after the release of *10,000 Towns*, an album that secured their third No. 1, "Drunk Last Night."

Band members Mike Eli, James Young, Chris Thompson and Jon Jones are excited, to say the least. They just flew in from Dallas, in the throes of a rare Texas snow and ice storm, for Nashville's Country Radio Seminar. As they settle into a hotel conference room for a catch-up session, they're excited to be talking about the new EP, *Turn It On*, and getting it to die-hard fans.

"This is something that happened really quickly for us," Mike begins. "We never really stopped writing after *10,000 Towns* came out. We kept going



in and writing, and we wrote a couple of songs with Ross Copperman and Jeremy Stover. Those two songs—'Drink You Up' and 'Your Place or Mine'—lit a fire. And so after writing those songs, we were really wanting to get back into the studio, and around that time we also wrote 'Turn It On' and, shortly after that, 'Plastic.' But it was one of those things that Ross and Jeremy were on the bus and we were cutting those bus demos of those songs and they were sounding so

cool that we ended up asking Jeremy and Ross to co-produce, cutting four tracks and seeing what happened."

Ultimately, they went with a four-song EP instead of a full-length project so they could get the music into their fans' hands and ears faster. Chris maintains that they actually had no release plan as they began recording demos. "There was no 'This is going to be an album, this is going to be an EP'—we just wanted to go in and try something new and see where it was going to take us," he says, smiling. "The label ended up coming in and hearing some of the stuff and they were like, 'Here we go.' I don't think we've ever had a project in the past that the label was so excited to get it out."

"They fast-tracked it," James chimes in. "So, this is kind of an experiment for us. It kind of goes back to our early days when we played at clubs and bars and we burned CDs. It's getting the music right out to the fans."

Chris explains that the shorter



ELI YOUNG BAND CONTINUED

EP format, particularly in a digitally dominated music marketplace, offers some distinct advantages over a full album. "It's like, write the song. A couple of weeks later, go in the studio. A couple of weeks later, it's mixed. A couple of weeks later, it's going to radio and there's an EP out, which is great for us," he says, noting that songs on a full-length album can feel old by the time they start playing them live. "Usually it's like, record a whole album and then put out one song, then wait a year before the album comes out. Now, we can play the songs live."

"It's been a long time since we've

had the opportunity to record new music and the fans be able to get it in their hands while it's brand-new and fresh to us as well," adds Mike. "To be able to walk on that stage and for a song to be fresh for both us and the fans, I didn't realize how much of a rush that is."

The title track and first single just hit country radio, but the band has already been testing the high-energy, up-tempo track in their live show, and the crowd response—as at the recent San Antonio Rodeo—has been as positive as the song's message. "It was fun to get up onstage and have that nervousness and anxiety of playing

something new and not only getting it right, but getting that feedback. It's exciting," says Jon.

Another advantage to releasing the four-song EP is that each song has a fighting chance at sales success. With only two to four songs released to radio from albums, more than half of a project is often unheard in a sales marketplace that leans toward single downloads. "That's where it gets frustrating, because you'll write a song, then spend two days in the studio on it and never play it live and never work it at radio," explains Chris. Also, the rapid turnaround for the



(From left) Mike Eli, Jon Jones, Chris Thompson and James Young



Mike and Jon put their best feet forward.



EP better captures, as James puts it, “a snapshot of where we are right now as opposed to a year ago.”

Now that they’re happily embracing the EP format, will we ever see another full-length project from Eli Young Band? Maybe, says Jon, and it could be a whopper. “There are some people that come out to our shows that only know the songs that were No. 1 at radio,” he says. “But then you’ll have people coming to our shows that are requesting songs from our first record, and if we don’t play some songs from our first five years as a band, then they don’t get their money’s worth because they

don’t care about hearing anything that was on the radio. We have a good mix of fans. The only thing that would be fun is, once contracts aren’t involved and we’re just making music for ourselves and our grandkids, is to just go back and we’ll put out that record with the 200 songs we’ve written that didn’t quite make it. On the flip side of releasing this four-song EP, which is perfect for right here in the moment, there is all this material that gets written that ends up on our computers or on the shelf, and it would be fun for that segment of our fan base to know everything

we’ve been thinking about.”

Mike’s wife, Casey, would be among the fans supporting that decision if the band ever decided to go for it. “Sometimes she’ll ask, ‘Why don’t you ever play that song live?’” he says. “And I’m like, ‘Baby, that was never on an album.’ She forgets because she has access to all of our music. We can’t even get to all the songs on the album, much less songs we haven’t recorded.”

As Mike, James, Chris and Jon say their goodbyes to *Country Weekly* and prepare for more hellos to country radio, their gratitude is written in their smiles. After all, they are a great example of what can happen when a die-hard fan base meets with radio support to make something big. “We still consider ourselves lucky to have this job,” says Mike. “So, being at CRS and having this opportunity—because we’ve been to CRS when there was no opportunity—we’ve seen both sides, so we appreciate it. I guess the only difference is, we’re in two different instances saying thank you to the people who gave us a career, whether it’s radio or the fans.” ■

NASH MUSIC MADNESS!

THE SUPER 16



64%



36%



34%



66%



35%



65%



41%



59%

THE GREAT 8



56%



44%

THE WEST



55%



45%

THE FAB 4



1. MIRANDA LAMBERT (TEXAS)

- Grammy Best Country Album
- CMA Female Vocalist of the Year
- CMA Album of the Year

Miranda got out to an early lead against Dierks and never looked back, while Carrie used a last-minute surge to overtake Blake late in the game. Now it's time for the two most popular women in country music to go head-to-head. While both ladies got their starts on reality sing-



ing competitions, the reality of this competition will come down to power. Forget finesse, these vocal powerhouses have the same game plan: total domination from the opening tip with their show-stopping supremacy. It may be a tossup, but one thing's for sure—the West will be well represented in the Finals.

3. CARRIE UNDERWOOD (OKLAHOMA)

- Grammy Best Country Solo Performance
- ACM Special Achievement Award
- Billboard No. 1 album

THE FINALS
AVAILABLE IN
OUR MARCH 30
ISSUE

COMPILED
BY JIM C

WHO
WIN
AL

NASH M

THE
CHAM

AVAILABLE
APRIL
ISSUE

MUSIC M

VIS
COUNTRY
AND VOTE

FGL BY ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ/NICKELODEON; BLAKE, DIERKS, M&T, JASON, SAM BY JOHN RUSSELL/CMA; GARTH BY VINCENT MIZZU/CORBIS; MILEY BY JEFF KOHLMAN/ICON; KENNY BY ERIC HENDERSON/CORBIS; KACEY BY ALBERT FERREIRA/ABC; LUKE BY IMAGE SPACE INC/CORBIS; STURGILL BY TERRY WYATT/SHORE FIRE MEDIA; KENNY BY TAMMIE ALLEN/AFFORD BYRON/ICON/CORBIS; TIM BY DEB GOLING/CORBIS; CARRIE, MIRANDA COURTESY/MIRANDA LAMBERT FACEBOOK; KENNY & LUKE BY JASON MERRITT/GETTY IMAGES

In honor of college basketball's craziest month, *NASH* created a bracket with 16 of the hottest solo/duo acts in country music. We seeded them based on the strength of their current "season" and pitted them against each other in a winner-takes-all format that features East vs. West. For the next two weeks, visit CountryWeekly.com and VOTE on who you think should win the head-to-head battles until we crown our champ.

LED BY
CASEY

WILL
IT
HAPPEN?

MAGAZINE



BRADNESS

GET
WEEKLY.COM
TODAY!

THE FINALS
AVAILABLE IN
OUR MARCH 30
ISSUE

THE FAB 4



1. LUKE BRYAN (GEORGIA)

- Grammy Best Country Album nominee
- Grammy Best Country Song nominee
- AMA Favorite Country Album

Luke dominated Eric and Kenny crushed Sam to set up a mano a mano matchup between the current CMA Entertainer of the Year and a man who has won the award four times. Kenny may be the lowest



seed and oldest competitor in the tourney, but he has proven that this old dog can still hunt. Both guys are renowned for selling out their arena shows, so the beast out of the East will come down to who wins the

crowd early. Look for Luke to wow the ladies with his extra-medium blue jeans while Kenny dons the sleeveless tee and straw hat that has made him a crowd favorite for the last 20 years.



6. KENNY CHESNEY (TENNESSEE)

- ACC Groundbreaker Award
- *Billboard* No. 1 album
- RIAA platinum song

THE GREAT 8



64%

THE SUPER 16



74%



26%



36%



45%



55%

THE EAST



70%



60%



40%



30%



51%



49%



SHAWN BY TYLER ANDREWS; JASON & JASON COURTESY SHAWN PARR

Burnin' It Down

JASON ALDEAN HEATED UP NASHVILLE AT THE PERFECT TIME.

With temperatures in the teens and a wave of record-breaking cold during the second week of February, there were several events in Nashville that had to be canceled. Then came Saturday, Feb. 21, when the temperature began to rise, rain started to fall and suddenly the ice began to melt. Nashville started to show its life again.

At the Bridgestone Arena, buses were parked along the curb and ticket holders for the Jason Aldean concert started to show up. It had been a few days since people were able to get out of their homes because of snow and ice, and you could tell there was an energy starting to build. As the doors opened, I could tell that country fans were there to let loose, blow off a little steam and raise the roof. But the only question was, would the show deliver?

The answer came quickly with the

first beat of the drum from opener Tyler Farr. Fans were on their feet, and soon Tyler had everyone singing along to "Redneck Crazy" and his latest single, "A Guy Walks Into a Bar." After a short intermission, Cole Swindell took to the stage and didn't disappoint. It was a chilly Saturday night in Nashville and he had every fan just "Chillin' It" in the stands and on the floor. Several times Cole stopped to hear his fans sing back the words that took him to the top of the charts with "Hope You Get Lonely Tonight," and then he belted out his latest hit, "Ain't Worth the Whiskey." Cole provided the perfect setup for the guy who would melt the ice that was still on the roof of the Bridgestone Arena. Dee Jay Silver was keeping the energy rocking, and then the lights dimmed.

Suddenly flames appeared on a

screen and a loud guitar started to play. Out of nowhere, flames began shooting out of a giant "A" that Jason Aldean was raised from. At that moment, IT WAS ON. The Burn It Down Tour delivered. For the next two hours, Jason rocked Nashville and I don't think anybody sat down in their seats once he fired up the stage. With hit after hit, from "Hicktown" to his latest, "Just Gettin' Started," Jason proved why he has three ACM nominations and is a nominee for Entertainer of the Year. A big surprise was when Randy Owen from Alabama came out and joined Jason for a few songs, including an acoustic version of "My Home's in Alabama".

Jason has stepped up his game. He gave us all what we needed most . . . THE HEAT! The Burn It Down Tour gets an A+.



Shawn Parr, a nationally recognized disc jockey and television announcer, is host of **NASH NIGHTS LIVE WITH SHAWN PARR**, airing nightly from 7 p.m. to midnight/ET.

Hollywood Hillbillies



Gettin' hitched.

SEASON PREMIERE
Saturday, April 11
9ET/10PT

 **REELZ**
CHANNEL

DISH
299

DIRECTV
238

AT&T U-Verse
799

Fios
233

To find REELZ on your local
cable provider, visit **REELZ.com**

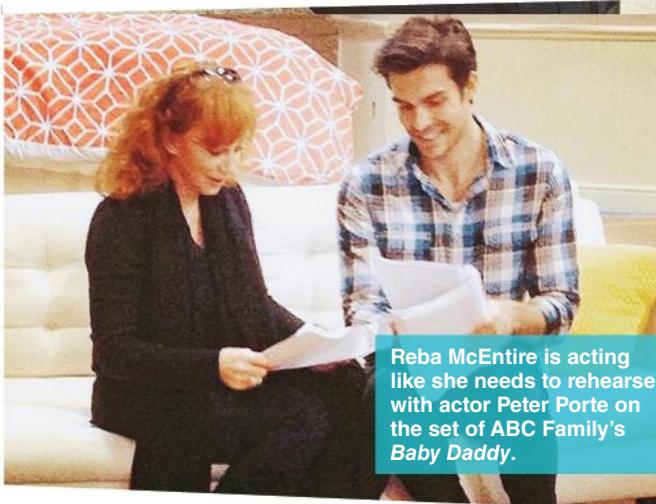
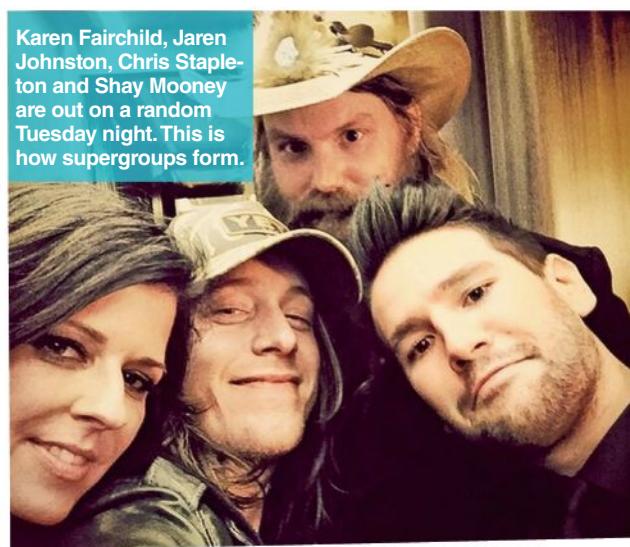
NASH | ON the SCENE

OUT AND ABOUT WITH YOUR FAVORITE STARS!



Joe Don Rooney of Rascal Flatts feels lucky, punk. That's why he sports #FlatClint (Eastwood) on his golf bag.

Karen Fairchild, Jaren Johnston, Chris Stapleton and Shay Mooney are out on a random Tuesday night. This is how supergroups form.



Reba McEntire is acting like she needs to rehearse with actor Peter Porte on the set of ABC Family's *Baby Daddy*.

Chris Young is a snow angel waiting to happen.



Chase Rice wants you to know that no animals were harmed in this picture. But you should see all of his other pics.



In his quest for Renaissance man status, Kip Moore checks off "create a masterpiece" from his list.



KIX BROOKS RADIO

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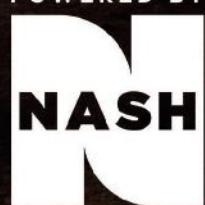
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KATY K RANCH DRESSING

If you've ever thought you were born in the wrong era, at least as far as fashion goes, then a stop at Katy K Ranch Dressing is a necessity on your next trip to Nashville. The shelves and racks are filled with vintage clothing and retro-inspired styles that are cheeky and fun, but completely wearable. Men's shirts hearken back to the Old West with classy pearl snaps, or to the '50s with pinup embroidery, while women's dresses range from pinup sexiness to sock-hop cuteness, and they also have the crinolines to make that circle skirt pop. Even the littlest nugget in the family can get in on the fun with toddler-sized miniature pearl snaps, complete with fringe.

Half the fun of going to Katy K's is the great staff, who have welcomed celebrities from *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit models GiGi Hadid and Kelly Rohrbach to actresses like Nicole Kidman to rock and country stars like Jack White and Reba McEntire.

— TAMMY RAGUSA



State Your Case

ALL RISE, THIS COUNTRY COURT IS NOW IN SESSION.

COUNTRY WEEKLY READERS, consider yourselves members of our esteemed jury for the next several minutes as individuals on our staff get all lawyerly and defend their picks for who should be inducted this year into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

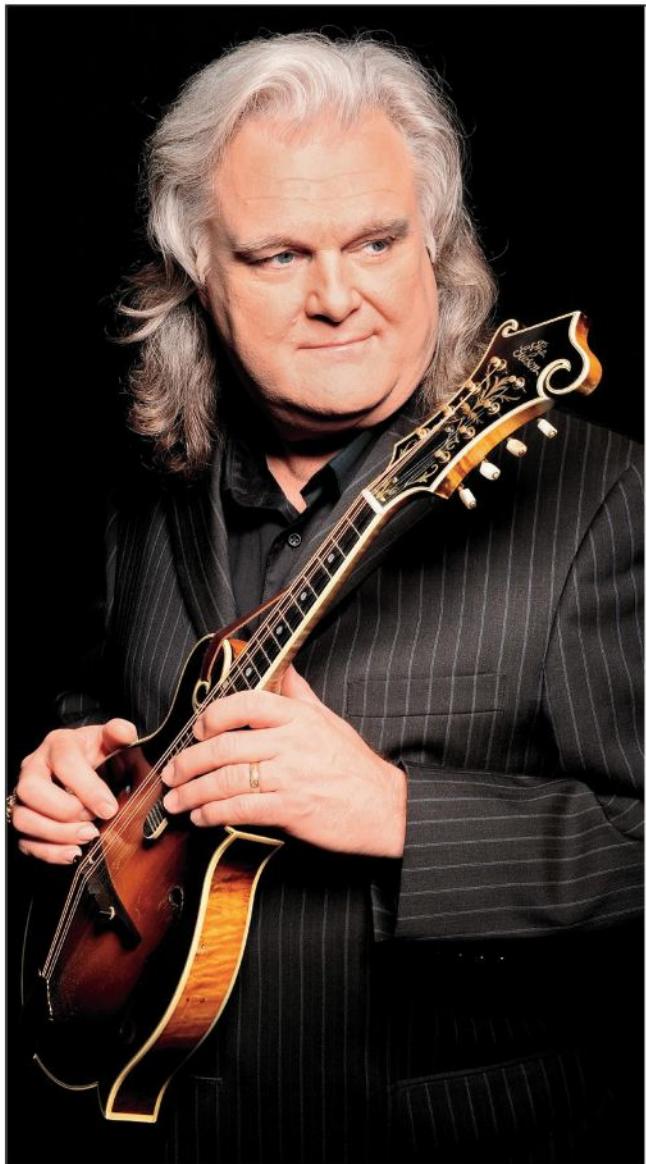
For this case, we've focused our efforts on the Modern Era candidates, who are eligible for induction 20 years after they first achieve "national prominence." While there are several candidates who could also be considered Veteran Era candidates (40

years after achieving national prominence), our pool of possible inductees includes Brooks & Dunn, Clint Black, Kenny Chesney, David Allan Coe, Charlie Daniels, Crystal Gayle, Mickey Gilley, Faith Hill, Alan Jackson, The Judds,

Toby Keith, The Oak Ridge Boys, Tim McGraw, Charlie Rich, Ricky Skaggs, Marty Stuart, Randy Travis, Travis Tritt, Tanya Tucker, Gene Watson, Keith Whitley, Hank Williams Jr. and Dwight Yoakam.

Before you jump to a conclusion and reach your verdict based on the names we've just listed, let our staff members state their cases. One of them might change your mind . . . or the mind of one of the more than 100 Hall of Fame electors charged with the task of selecting the next Modern Era member.





Ricky Skaggs

ATTORNEY: senior writer Bob Paxman

OPENING STATEMENT: Based on his body of work and wide-ranging influence, Ricky Skaggs belongs in the next class of Country Music Hall of Fame members.

KEY EVIDENCE: Eight Country Music Association awards (including Entertainer of the Year in 1985), 14 Grammy awards, member of both Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Band and Emmylou Harris' famed Hot Band.

FACTS OF THE CASE: The Country Music Hall of Fame isn't just about numbers. The Country Music Association and the voters who cast their ballots for the hallowed Hall also consider these pertinent points: What trails did you blaze? Whom did you influence? What is your country music legacy?

We submit that Ricky Skaggs can answer all these points with solid credibility. As far as pioneering is concerned, Ricky is one of the great innovators and trailblazers of modern country. Ricky led the fight to bring country music back from the depths of the *Urban Cowboy*, pop-infused country of the early 1980s. He helped pioneer the era's neo-traditionalist movement, drawing upon heroes like Bill Monroe and Ralph Stanley. Fusing the contemporary sounds with a notable touch of bluegrass, Ricky made traditional country popular again, even racking up a No. 1 hit with a remake of Bill Monroe's "Uncle Pen." The decade soon gave way to more traditionalists who followed Ricky's lead, including Randy Travis, Hank Williams Jr. and Keith Whitley. No less a figure than the legendary Chet Atkins once credited Ricky for "single-handedly" saving country music.

And his influence? To start, Ricky's outstanding musicianship—he plays mandolin, guitar and fiddle, among other instruments—has placed him in a different class of artists. Not only can he write and sing the songs, he can play them with a feverish ferocity. His versatility and almost jazz-like improvisational playing has certainly influenced the likes of Vince Gill and Brad Paisley, along with countless bluegrass artists.

Skeptics might argue that in the last 15 years Ricky has turned his creative attention more toward bluegrass and Christian music. Indeed, most of his Grammy honors have been earned in the bluegrass field. But while that's true, there can be little argument that Ricky has nonetheless helped bridge the gap between the sounds of Appalachia and the stylings of Music Row.

Ricky has also been a progressive reformer through his collaborations with artists from genres well beyond the country boundaries. He has recorded critically praised efforts with pop icon Barry Gibb of the Bee Gees and rock standout Bruce Hornsby, who has often joined Ricky on tour. Through these various pairings, Ricky has undoubtedly brought new fans to country music.

And we implore you—is there a more wonderful legacy than that?

CLOSING ARGUMENT: He's been a musical "father" for more than 30 years—and fathers should always be honored before the sons.

Alan Jackson

ATTORNEY: deputy editor Jim Casey

OPENING STATEMENT: Alan Jackson ushered in a new era of traditional country music with a style and bravura that the masses adored and the everyman envied.

KEY EVIDENCE: Three CMA Entertainer of the Year awards, two Grammys, one beautiful mustache.

FACTS OF THE CASE: Mustachioed and mulleted, Alan burst onto the country music scene in 1989 with his platinum-selling debut album, *Here in the Real World*. But that success—and mullet—didn't happen overnight. To truly appreciate the heights to which this singer/songwriter has risen, it's important to know where he started. Born into humble beginnings in Newnan, Ga., in 1958, Alan grew up listening to the spiritual sounds of gospel music in his family's local church. After a friend introduced him to the stylings of Gene Watson and Hank Williams Jr., Alan became hooked on the everyman lyricism of country music. When Alan was 16, his parents bought him a \$50 guitar, and he made his first public performance a year later.

After dropping out of high school, he worked

a series of blue-collar jobs, started his own band, Dixie Steel, and became a frequent performer at local clubs. He scraped by on the regional circuit before landing his big break in 1986 when his wife, Denise, who was working as a flight attendant, met Glen Campbell and gave him a copy of Alan's demo. Alan secured a songwriting gig at Glen's publishing company, eventually becoming the first artist to sign with Arista's new Nashville division in 1989. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Over the course of the next 26 years, Alan unleashed 26 *Billboard* No. 1 hits, including his 9/11 tribute "Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)," dropped more than a dozen platinum albums and earned two Grammys, 16 CMA awards (three for Entertainer of the Year) and 18 ACM awards. He has sold nearly 60 million albums worldwide and ranks as one of the 10 best-selling country artists of all time.

The folkloric escapades of Alan are almost as compelling as his music, from spontaneously adding a snippet of George Jones' "Choices" to his set at the 1999 CMA Awards to donning a fake mullet and stonewashed jeans at his 2014 artist-in-residence show at the Country Music Hall of Fame. And if it's been a while since you've reveled in the awesomeness of the 1993 music video for "Chattahoochee," stop reading right now and watch it.

CLOSING ARGUMENT: It's not a question of if, but when Alan Jackson will get inducted, and there's no sense in procrastinating.





Randy Travis

ATTORNEY: managing editor Jon Freeman
OPENING STATEMENT: Randy was a key figure in launching country's neo-traditional movement of the '80s, at a time when radio favored pop-leaning production.

KEY EVIDENCE: Twenty-five million albums sold, "Forever and Ever, Amen," a lasting influence on today's traditionalists.

FACTS OF THE CASE: Oh, the irony and injustice of Randy Travis' (born Traywick) early years in Nashville. Though clearly a gifted singer and performer, the North Carolina-born Randy was rejected by virtually every record label in Nashville for being "too country." But Warner Bros. Records saw something in the young traditionalist, and by the release of Randy's 1986 album, *Storms of Life*, a sea change—one that his unabashedly down-home country style helped start—was afoot in country music.

That album, which featured the singles "Diggin' Up Bones" and "No Place Like Home," was hugely successful and went on to multiplatinum status—making Randy one of the first country artists to cross that threshold with one album. Neatly avoiding the sophomore slump, Randy had a follow-up smash with *Always & Forever*, which contained the single "Forever and Ever, Amen," which began a string of seven consecutive *Billboard* No. 1 songs. He closed out the '80s with two more platinum albums, *Old 8x10* and *No Holdin' Back*.

One of Randy's biggest singles, "Hard Rock Bottom of Your Heart," appeared on the *No Holdin' Back* album and helped him usher in the '90s, but by that time the much-ballyhooed Class of '89 had arrived. Clint Black and Garth Brooks began to dominate radio playlists, mixing Randy's sense of tradition with the arena-friendly moves of '70s rock 'n' roll. Nonetheless, Randy continued to chart singles and sell respectfully in that tough market through the end of the '90s.

Following his personal convictions, Randy detoured into country gospel in the early 2000s and made considerable headway there with a slew of awards and hits. It wasn't until 2011 and his album *Anniversary Celebration* that he came back to more secular country music and recorded with everyone from Don Henley to Carrie Underwood.

Unfortunately, Randy's personal troubles and illness stalled his return to full-on recording and touring in another period when country music has shifted toward pop sounds. Even more tragically, the 2013 stroke that nearly took his life seems to have robbed him of his voice—that mellow, perfect instrument that was so fundamental to shaping the sound of the mid-1980s in country music. Fans can only hope to hear it again someday.

CLOSING ARGUMENT: "Forever and Ever, Amen" is just over four minutes long, but Randy's contributions to country are eternal.



Hank Williams Jr.

ATTORNEY: senior writer Tammy Ragusa

OPENING STATEMENT: He played his first show in 1957 at 8 years old, debuted at the Grand Ole Opry in 1960, had a No. 1 hit in 1970, survived a near-death accident in 1975 and recorded an album (*Hank Williams, Jr. & Friends*) that redefined the person and his music. He defines "badass."

KEY EVIDENCE: Three-time ACM Entertainer of the Year, 10 *Billboard* No. 1 hits, unofficial leader of hillbilly rednecks everywhere.

FACTS OF THE CASE: Those who worship at the altar of the NFL would argue that his performance of the *Monday Night Football* theme, a variation of his smash "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight," is more than enough reason. It did, in fact, earn Bocephus four Emmy awards. Others would say you can't deny his legacy. The Williams tree does indeed boast some wide-reaching

branches, from his legendary father, namesake and the voice and pen behind iconic country songs like "Kaw-Liga" and "Your Cheatin' Heart," to Hank Jr.'s own talented offspring, including son Hank III and daughters Holly and Hilary.

But the truth is, his talent is much deeper than a football ditty or being just one of a long line of music makers. Hank Jr. had mighty shoes to fill and has done an exemplary job. A multi-instrumentalist, adept at guitar, piano, banjo, fiddle and more, Hank has written hits that are as well known to rockers as they are to honky-tonkers, and have become part of the late-night, beer-drinking American vernacular. "Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound" is as much an expression as a song, and "Family Tradition" is a little empty without the call-and-response of a room full of enthusiastic listeners.

While musically, politically and socially, he is jarringly unapologetic, he also waves the banner for young, raucous country stars who don't fit neatly into a commercial stereotype, much like himself when he was breaking into the biz. He's a proud American and a proud country music star.

CLOSING STATEMENT: Football and legacies aside, *Stop and think it over / Try to put yourself in my unique position.*

Brooks & Dunn

ATTORNEY: contributing writer

Alanna Conaway

OPENING STATEMENT: Brooks &

Dunn didn't just show the way, they proved to be "Hard Workin'" men by paving the roads and laying all of the groundwork for those who followed.

KEY EVIDENCE: Two Grammys, 16 ACM Top Vocal Duo awards, 17 CMA wins for Vocal Duo of the Year.

FACTS OF THE CASE: Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn were both working on individual careers in the 1980s when a mutual friend suggested they meet each other. By 1991, they were signed to Arista Nashville and calling themselves Brooks & Dunn.

Fans immediately gravitated toward both men, who each made their own distinct contributions to the duo. Ronnie brought his limber voice and interpretive skill to the table, while Kix clearly had an ear for a song and a bold sense of showmanship. Together, their songwriting talent and high-octane stage show made them arena-level headliners throughout their career.

Straight out of the chute, they topped the country singles chart with their debut release, "Brand New Man." Their next three singles repeated the success of their debut hit, and they made country music history as the first duo or group to ever send their first four singles to the top of the charts.

Throughout their 20-year career, the duo charted 20 *Billboard* No. 1 hits, including "Neon Moon," "Boot Scootin' Boogie," "She's Not the Cheatin' Kind," "Red Dirt Road," "My Maria," "That Ain't No Way to Go" and "Ain't Nothing 'Bout You," while 21 others reached the Top 10.

But it wasn't just the charts where Brooks & Dunn were burning things down. They also quickly dominated any other act's shot at winning Duo of the Year for several awards shows. The two-time Grammy-winning Brooks & Dunn owned that CMA title starting from their first nod in the



category in 1991 all the way through 2006, only losing once, in 2000. During those years, they also nabbed the ACM's Top Vocal Duo of the Year on multiple occasions.

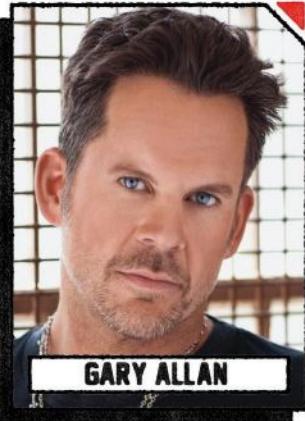
Brooks & Dunn announced their retirement in August 2009, but even then continued to be a staple in country music on their own. Ronnie released his 2011 self-titled solo album and charted success with "Bleed Red," while Kix released an album in 2012, getting his own taste of success with the project's title track, "New to This Town." Kix also has become a beloved radio personality as host of NASH-FM programs *Kickin' It With Kix* and *American Country Countdown*.

CLOSING ARGUMENT: Any duo or group currently finding success in country music has Brooks & Dunn to thank, so now it's the Hall of Fame's turn to do that very thing. **CW**

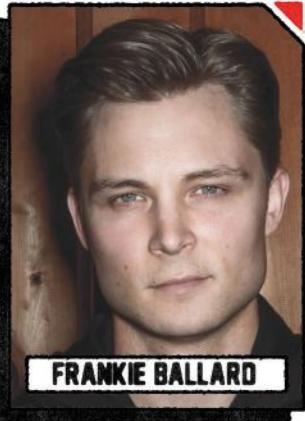
COUNTRY'S HOTTEST BACHELOR

VOTE NOW!

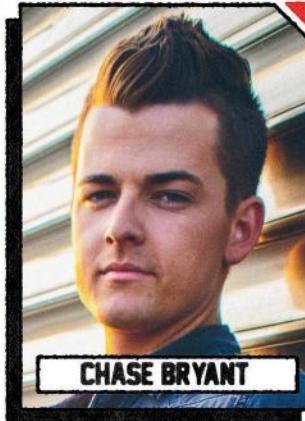
We don't need an ABC reality show to figure out country music's hottest bachelor. We put the ballot in your hands as we pit 24 of our favorite single hunks against each other in a winner-takes-all battle of hotness. Chris Young pulled out the win in 2014. Can he repeat as champ, or will Chris be dethroned by one of country music's smoking vets or sizzling newcomers? **Go to *CountryWeekly.com* and cast your vote until the poll closes on March 29.**



GARY ALLAN



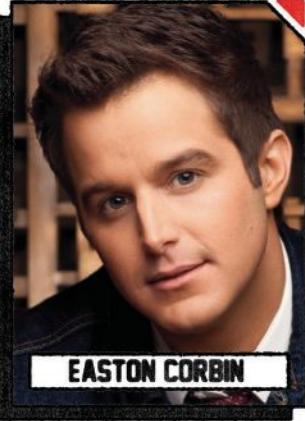
FRANKIE BALLARD



CHASE BRYANT



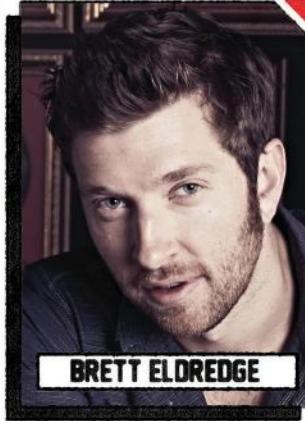
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BILLY CURRINGTON



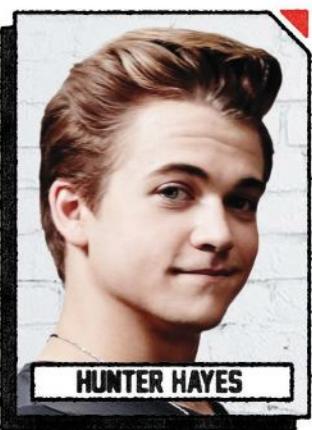
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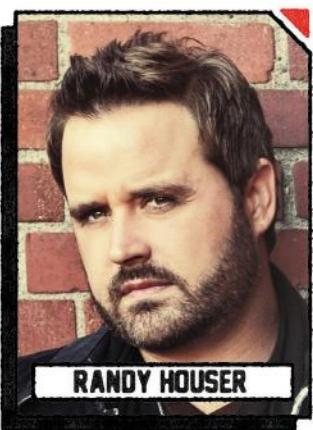
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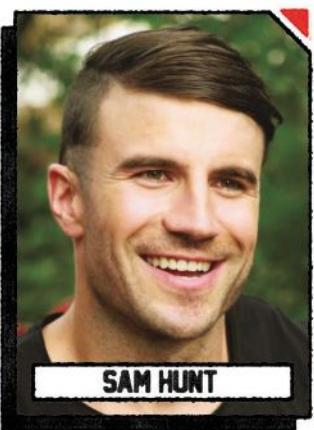
MIKE GOSSIN



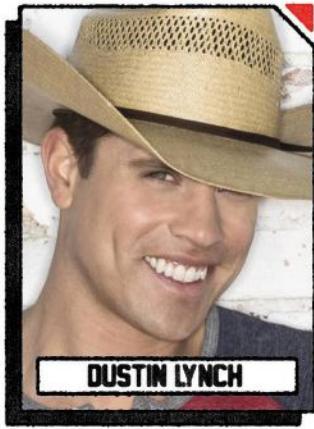
HUNTER HAYES



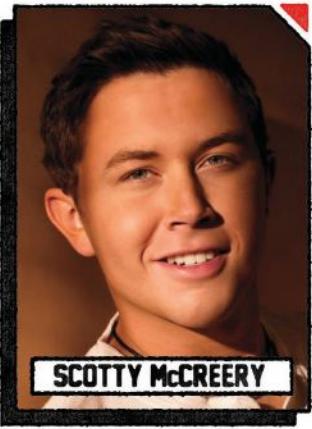
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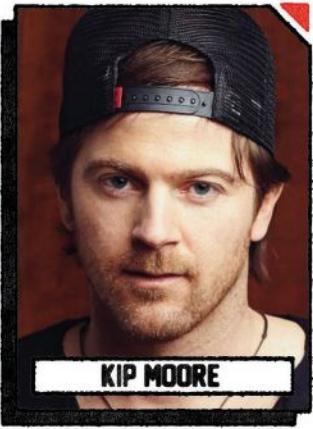
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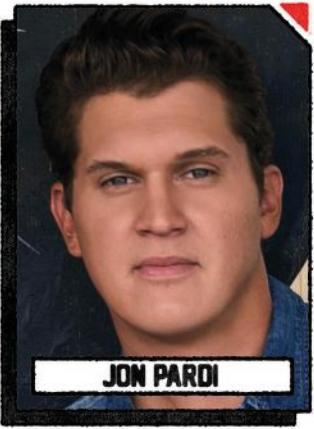
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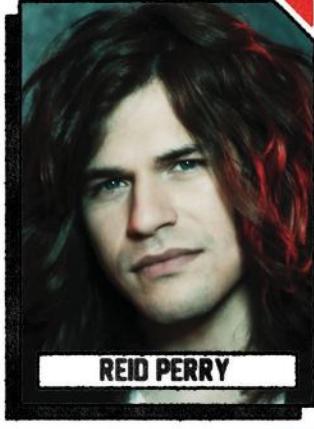
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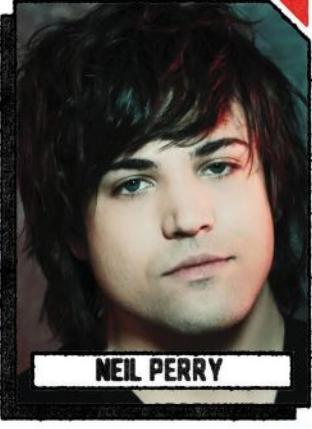
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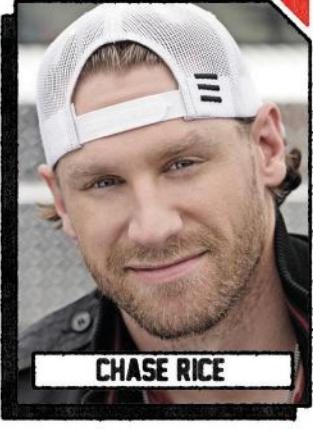
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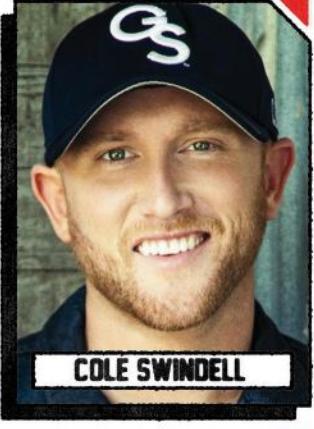
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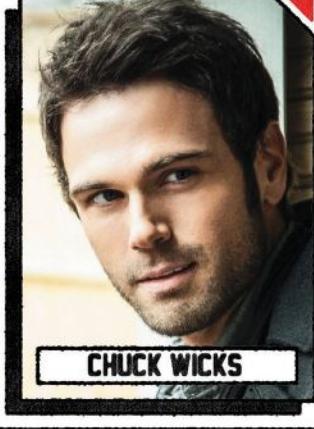
NEIL PERRY



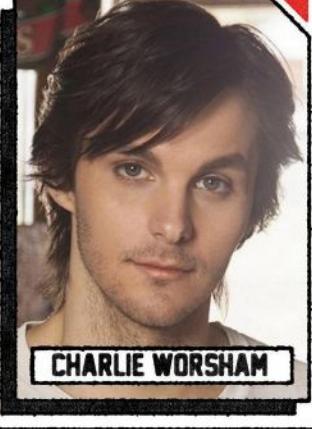
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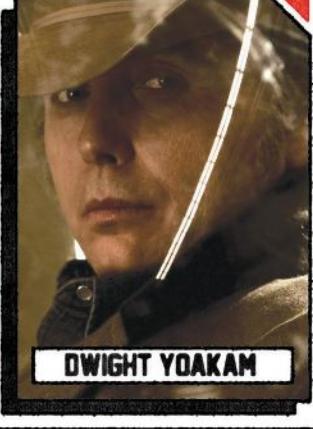
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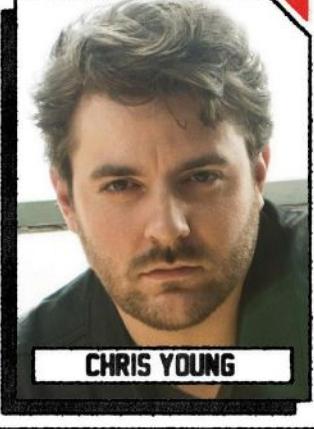
CHUCK WICKS



CHARLIE WORSHAM



DWIGHT YOAKAM



CHRIS YOUNG

CRUISING TO

The second annual **COUNTRY MUSIC CRUISE** was an incredible windfall for all involved.

STORY BY DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

It was a world-class country music festival on the high seas when The Oak Ridge Boys, Charley Pride, Martina McBride, Aaron Tippin, Lorrie Morgan, Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers, Darryl Worley, Wade Hayes, John Anderson, The Roys, Chuck Mead & His Grassy Knoll Boys, Bryan White and many others took part in the second annual Country Music Cruise.

Sailing on the Holland America Line's *Eurodam*, country music fans from all over the world came together to enjoy multiple concerts by their favorite artists. Beyond the music, there were numerous activities, including autograph sessions, interviews, a costume contest, a gospel concert, wine tasting with Aaron Tippin, a Texas pool party with Johnny Lee, a women-only session with Lorrie Morgan and Lorianne Crook, a celebrity poker tournament, the Grand Ole Opry 90th birthday party, a corn hole tournament and

many other fun events.

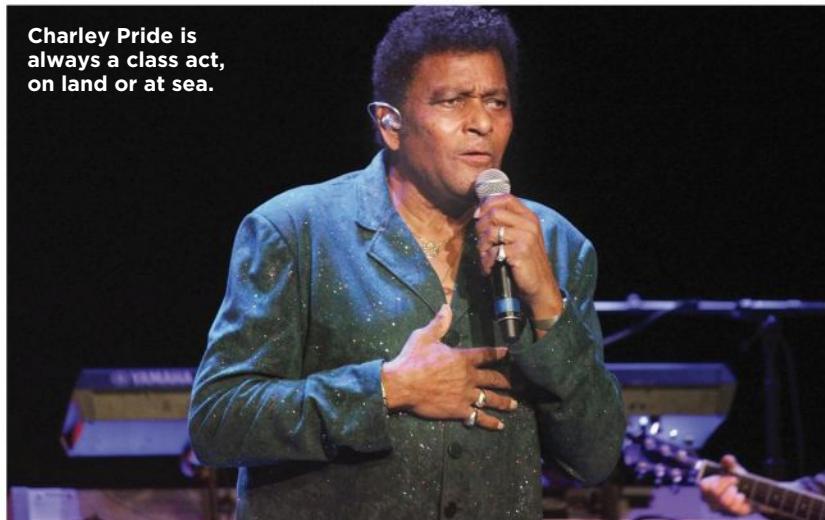
"The Country Music Cruise is the ultimate cruise if you wish to hear some of the best country music on the planet," says Oak Ridge Boys lead singer Duane Allen. "There was something very special about being in the middle of the ocean singing gospel music with The Gatlins, Lorrie Morgan, Charley Pride, The Roys and The Oak Ridge Boys. The food was amazing and just getting to spend time with the other country music artists and our fans kept me having a great time the entire trip."

For John Anderson, it was a return to cruising. "Years ago we did several cruises and always enjoyed them, but it had been actually 22 years since we had done a cruise," he says. "The camaraderie of getting away and everybody getting to be together and relax for a week, it's been a real change for us. Everybody is dear friends of mine so it's been great being out with all the other entertainers, seeing the shows and having fun."

For Aaron Tippin and his lovely wife, Thea, cruising was a new experience. "We had never done one. It's our first cruise ever and we have had a ball. I loved it. I'm sad it's over," Aaron says. "I wish we had been here at the front of the week and played our show and we could have partied the rest of the week. We came on midweek in St. Thomas. We were working on the new album [25], the 25th anniversary album, and I was still mixing the day before we left to come on the cruise."

In addition to enjoying the music and activities on the ship, the *Eurodam* visited several ports, including Nassau, Bahamas, and St. Thomas and St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. "Saint Croix was my favorite stop," says Wade Hayes. "It was a little less industrialized. It was a little less touristy and it was quieter. I took a long walk by myself through the town. It was very peaceful and there were some beautiful views. I bought some souvenirs for friends

Charley Pride is always a class act, on land or at sea.



THE MUSIC

back home. There were a lot of really old cool buildings, too. I really like the kind of ramshackle old beach towns, and I took a bunch of pictures. It was a good day."

Elaine Roy of The Roys also loved visiting St. Croix. "Definitely my favorite day was in St. Croix on the beach looking for shells. It's one of my favorite things to do, even found a starfish," she says. "I have so many wonderful memories of the Country Music Cruise 2015, but doing the gospel hour with The Oak Ridge Boys, The Gatlins, Charley Pride and Lorrie Morgan was a favorite."

For the artists, spending time with the fans and the camaraderie of hanging out with other artists made the trip special. "Most of the time when we're doing shows, we don't get to see each other, even if we're on the same show, because one is coming off and the other is going on," says Aaron, "but we've had time to spend together on the cruise. Darryl Worley and I have become great buds since we started doing the Roots and Boots Tour with Sammy [Kershaw]. He's out here, and me

and him and Thea and [his wife] Kimberly have hung out together. It's wonderful to get to spend time with them. I didn't know a cruise would be this much fun."

Lorrie and her husband, Randy, also had a great time. "It's been fun and getting to see everybody's shows and hanging out with my peers," Lorrie says. "And really getting to hang with the fans has been fun."

Lee Roy agrees. "The highlight of the week is the fans, the people we get to interact with and have dinner with and get to talk to and the people who were not aware of our music that now are, and getting to hang with good friends and making some new friends. That's really what this is all about," Lee says. "Last year we did this cruise, and afterward there were at least a half a dozen shows every month that we would do that people would say, 'We're here because we saw you on the cruise.' Getting to hopefully see that again this year on the road is something I'm really looking forward to."

"It's people from all over the world. That's cool," Asleep at the

Wheel's Ray Benson says. "That's the fun part. They're here and," he adds with a laugh, "they're a captive audience. They're trapped. They've got to come see us."

Wade was a featured performer on the inaugural Country Music Cruise last year, performed several standing-room-only shows on this year's cruise and is already booked for the 2016 cruise. For him, one of the highlights of this year's cruise was playing lead guitar for Johnny Lee. "A lot of people don't know but that was my very first job when I moved to Nashville," says Wade, who will be releasing a new album in March. "I was probably 22 or 23 years old and I got a job playing lead guitar for him. We've been friends ever since and I haven't gotten a chance to play his music in a long time, but getting to relearn all of those songs and playing with him was a real thrill. I loved it. He still sings great."

Johnny spent a good part of his show teasing Wade, making him turn red, and telling jokes that kept the audience in stitches, including Bryan White and his wife, Erica. "Johnny

John Anderson gets the crowd a-“Swingin’.”

Sibling duo The Roys dishes out some bluegrass.



SEVEN THINGS YOU MISSED ON THE 2015 COUNTRY MUSIC CRUISE



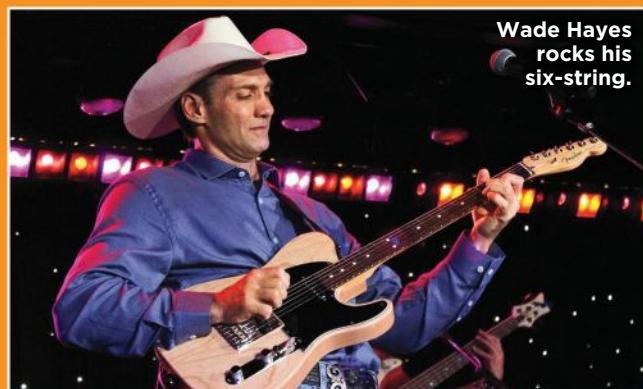
1 **CHARLEY PRIDE** dressed as Tigger for costume night. Fans took the stage during the late-night jam session by the pool and the winners were three ladies dressed as the **THREE BLIND MICE**, although a guy dressed in a white leotard and wings as the tooth fairy had a lot of audience support.

3 During the late-night jam session by the pool, **BRYAN WHITE** delivered an incredible cover of The Beatles' "Get Back," while Darryl Worley did Merle Haggard's "Tonight the Bottle Let Me Down" and Wade covered the Hag's "Ramblin' Fever."

6 A Star is Born! **CHRIS KEEFE**, an electrical contractor from Panama City, Fla., won the Country Superstar competition and got to open for **AARON TIPPIN** on the last night of the cruise. "It was unbelievable," Chris tells CW. "I never imagined when I got on the boat I'd be opening for Aaron Tippin. And then to play with his band. His band actually offered to play for me instead of using a track, so that was awesome!"



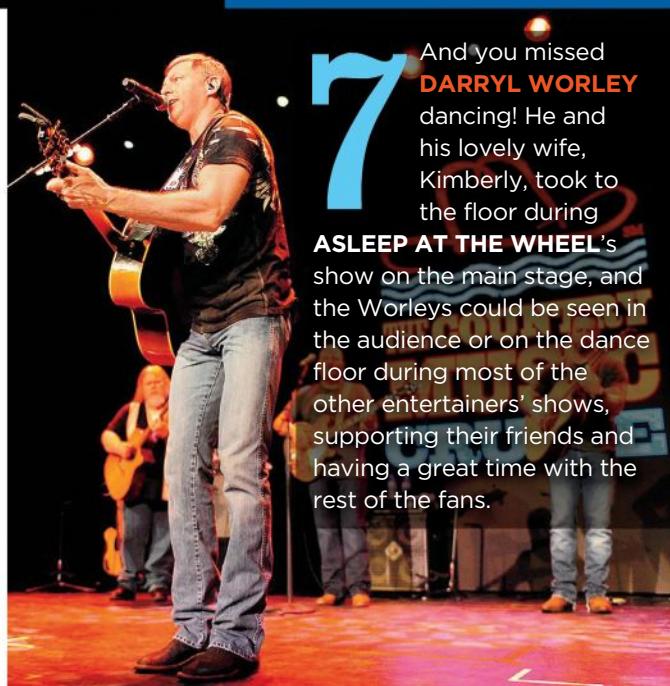
2 During his concert on the first night of the cruise, the audience wouldn't let **WADE HAYES** leave the stage. After delivering a set that included "Old Enough to Know Better," "The Day She Left Tulsa," "Wichita Lineman," "Don't Stop," "I'm Still Dancing With You" and his new single, "Go Live Your Life," the crowd kept chanting, "We want more." He returned to the stage and encored with Merle Haggard's "Make Up and Faded Blue Jeans" while the crowd danced and cheered.



Wade Hayes rocks his six-string.

4 Asleep at the Wheel's **RAY BENSON** swimming with a sea turtle. "I was snorkeling over at St. Thomas," says Ray. "They had these turtles. I think they were employed by the cruise ship."

5 A fan proposed to his girlfriend during The Roys' show. "We had a couple get engaged after we played the last song of our show, 'No More Lonely,'" says **ELAINE ROY**. "That was exciting to have them do that after our song!"



7 And you missed **DARRYL WORLEY** dancing! He and his lovely wife, Kimberly, took to the floor during **ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL**'s show on the main stage, and the Worleys could be seen in the audience or on the dance floor during most of the other entertainers' shows, supporting their friends and having a great time with the rest of the fans.



Brent Kissel greets passengers.



Lorrie Morgan (left) harmonizes beautifully on one of her songs.



Ain't no party like an Oak Ridge Boys party, particularly when it's in international waters.

had us on the floor because he tells jokes from the stage that I don't think most of us have the courage to tell," Bryan shares, "so he had us in stitches and on the floor. My chest is probably bruised from laughing so hard."

One of the most memorable moments for newcomer Brett Kissel happened in the ship's casino. "I spent a little bit of time at the blackjack table, and there was this guy who came and put a lot of money down, like a couple of thousand dollars," says Brett, a Canadian singer-songwriter who is currently opening for Brad Paisley and has a new album coming out this year in the U.S. on Warner Bros. "Everyone was cheering him on and cheering him on. He lost it all. We were all devastated for him. So he put out his card and said, 'I'm gonna double up.' He'd already lost two thousand dollars, so he doubled up and put down four thousand, and he got blackjack! So he ended up winning eight thousand. He won all his money back and then some! We were all cheering for him."

There was never a dull moment

during the entire seven-day cruise. And though there was food, gambling, shopping, snorkeling and numerous other fun things to do, it really all came down to the music. "Just hearing John Anderson sing 'I Just Came Home to Count the Memories' took me back just for a moment and it really got to me and choked me up a little bit," says Wade. "Just for a second, I was sitting there in my dad's old Ford pickup, riding to the lumberyard like we did so many times back when I was a kid, and it was a wonderful moment. It was one of my favorite moments of the whole cruise."

The Country Music Cruise 2016 is already set for Jan. 16-23 and will feature The Oak Ridge Boys, The Bellamy Brothers, Jamie O'Neal, Kenny Rogers, Randy Owen from Alabama, Kathy Mattea, Mel Tillis, B.J. Thomas, Shenandoah with Marty Raybon, Riders in the Sky and others.

"Our first cruise was about 20 years ago," says The Bellamy Brothers' David Bellamy. "We were like, 'OK, let's see what this is all about,' but when we got on the ship and saw how many fans were there and how

much fun they were having, we fell into the whole thing and had a blast."

Jamie O'Neal was booked on the 2014 Country Music Cruise and is looking forward to returning next year. "I loved the fact that instead of just a corner of the ship being country fans and country music, the whole dang shebang is country," she says. "It's like a CMA Music Fest sailing on the high seas! I love the jam session that Wade Hayes has on the outside deck, and the gospel hour is amazing. We played really funny games with the fans and had Q&As with them. That kind of interaction brings a really fun 'up close and personal' vibe to the whole experience."

David says he and his brother Howard are looking forward to the 2016 Country Music Cruise, and he's sorry they missed seeing Charley Pride dressed up like Tigger on this year's cruise. "Hopefully, if one of us has to wear that next year, it'll be Howard," he jokes. "My personal favorite [activities] on board are getting massages and the midnight buffet, but our band has perfected the wine tasting and the late-night jams." **CW**



BEACH BALLIN'

**DAVID NAIL IS READY TO
CRASH THE WAVES—AND
STAGE—AT TORTUGA
MUSIC FESTIVAL.**

IT MAY HAVE TAKEN Missouri native David Nail 21 years to see the ocean for the first time . . . but it only took a few short seconds for him to know it would become a sight he would never forget.

"I was quasi-dating this girl," says David, who will play the third annual Rock the Ocean's Tortuga Music Festival for the first time on April 12. "Her family had a place around Destin [Florida] and I ended up finding a friend who could go down there with me at the last minute to see her. We pulled into Panama City and there it was. I literally jumped out of the car and ran into the ocean

and just stood there and watched it. To this day, it fascinates me."

And while that story doesn't end on a great note ("The next day I got the flu for the first time in my life and had to drive seven hours back to Nashville"), David's love affair with the ocean and the outdoors in general has continued throughout a life and career that has kept him from having too much time for the traditional spring break escapades.

"We were pretty much landlocked growing up in Missouri," recalls David, whose latest single, "Kiss You Tonight," reached the Top 20 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart. "Growing up,

my parents were school teachers, so we didn't have a whole lot of money to go on extravagant vacations. Plus, spring break was the heart of baseball season, and as players we were never allowed to leave town. It wasn't until I moved to Nashville and went out on my own that suddenly I had the freedom to experiment with going places I had only heard about."

A self-proclaimed beach guy who lives for those days when he can nap to the sounds of the crashing waves, David will head down to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., with Tortuga Music Festival headliners Kenny Chesney and Zac Brown Band to play the two-



TORTUGA MUSIC FESTIVAL

When: APRIL 11-12

Where: FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.

Who:

KENNY CHESNEY
ZAC BROWN BAND

JAKE OWEN
THE BAND PERRY
LITTLE BIG TOWN
DOOBIE BROTHERS
TRACE ADKINS
JOSH TURNER
DAVID NAIL
THE MAVERICKS
COLT FORD
CHASE RICE
SAM HUNT



day music festival alongside a bevy of country music's finest.

"I didn't ever realize how difficult and how taxing it is on your body until the last few years, when it seems like it has gotten hotter and hotter," he says of playing the outdoor-festival circuit. "The great thing about the festivals is that you are usually playing with acts that you don't normally play with or haven't played with in a while. Everyone seems to raise their game a bit. I remember a few summers ago seeing Jake Owen for the first time and I remember looking at Dierks Bentley and saying, 'I think we are watching a superstar being born.'"

More so than not, it's the crowds that assemble at these festivals that make them such unforgettable shows. Last year, Tortuga drew more than 44,000 music fans and raised over \$100,000 for marine conservation organizations. "It's like what they say about the ol' hair of the dog," David says of the festival crowds, which he will also undoubtedly experience as he heads out this summer on the Pain Killer Tour with Little Big Town. "Some of these people are still up from the night before and they get right back at it again in the morning. As an artist, it's humbling to see their enthusiasm and how dedicated they

are to be out there three or four days straight simply for the love of music."

And speaking of the love of music, David finds himself smack in the middle of the longest and most creative stretch he has ever had, and hopes that this creative streak continues while he spends the warmer months out on the road. "I do prefer to be at home to write new music, but at the same time, you will go to a place like Tortuga for the first time and maybe see some people for the first time in a while, and that will inspire that creativity to come rushing in."

— TRICIA DESPRES



CRAIG BY KRISTIN BARLOWE/BBR MUSIC GROUP

BATTER



Craig Campbell steps up to the plate wearing a new team's stripes.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, even country music, is littered with one-hit wonders—acts that had one big song and then fell by the wayside because follow-up songs didn't fare as well. For Craig Campbell, his momentum was most definitely moving forward and upward when his Bigger Picture record label folded last May while his then single, "Keep Them Kisses Comin,'" was climbing the charts and in the Top 20.

As disheartening, disappointing and even career-ending as the collapse of Bigger Picture could have been for Craig, it wasn't. The music industry rallied behind the guy in the cowboy hat with the heart and voice of gold, the "Family Man" who could turn a phrase in a song that could make you giggle or swoon. The good guy.

Craig's smile lights up a dimly lit sitting room in *Country Weekly*'s offices as he settles onto a cow-spotted stool to chat. "It was a pretty cool thing," he remembers. "When Bigger Picture closed and we were on the heels of my biggest song I ever had as far as the chart was concerned, it was amazing the people that called, people from other label promotion teams. I remember getting e-mails and phone calls saying, 'Man, it sucks, this happening to you at this moment. Tell us what we can do to help out.'"

Not one to miss a beat, Craig had an answer ready. "If it was radio promotion, I told them, 'I know you can't call and try to get adds or spins for the song, but do me a favor and don't try to kill the song,'" he explains. "And

they stayed away from it and I was able to make phone calls to radio on my own behalf and say, 'Even though the record label closed, I didn't close. The song is a hit. What do I have to do to keep the song going?' And I was able to keep the song alive, almost by myself, for another six weeks."

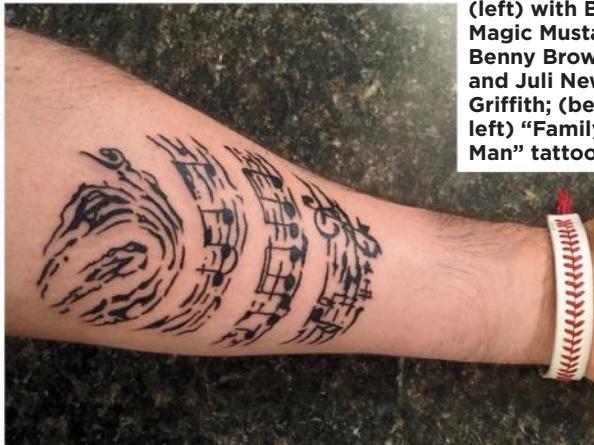
Not just six weeks, but six more spots, landing "Keep Them Kisses Comin'" soundly in the Top 10. It was a big deal and an effort not wasted on the humbled Craig.

"It's pretty cool for that to have happened, to have the labels and radio rally behind me," he admits, pausing to let it sink in before adding, "I feel like even now people are excited about what's to come, excited about the new music and excited to see me

CRAIG CAMPBELL CONTINUED



With daughters Kinni Rose (left) and Preslee and TC the Toombs County Bulldog; (left) with BBR/Magic Mustang's Benny Brown and Juli Newton-Griffith; (below left) "Family Man" tattoo



finally get a legit shot at doing what I feel like I'm capable of doing."

That might be easy to say now, but there had to have been some moments of fear after losing his label home. "There were a couple of weeks when it first happened that we were like, 'What are we going to do?'" he admits. "The most stressful part of it was that even though Bigger Picture closed, I was still under contract with them, so the biggest hurdle for us was trying to figure out how to get out of that deal. So even though they had shut their doors, we still had a binding agreement. That was our biggest hurdle." It was not an insurmountable hurdle, though. After several months of being without a record label, Craig announced that he would sign with Red Bow Records, part of the Broken Bow

family, home to Jason Aldean, Joe Nichols, Randy Houser and others.

And while his career was in no need of CPR, Craig still feels that signing with Red Bow and working with its team is a breath of fresh air. "It's great," he says, smiling. "I made this analogy this morning. We were living in this old decrepit house and we just bulldozed it and we're starting fresh with new music, management, publishing, publicity team. It's just all bad-to-the-bone people. Making the music is the easy part to me because we've got hit songs, and we've got a new producer with Jeremy Stover. He's figured out a way to keep me who I am, but enhance it so the music is bigger and it sounds bigger. And the energy is up."

Hopes are up, too: Craig admits that he'd love to have an out-of-the-

box No. 1 with his new label, but also says, "No matter what, we're going to release a great song."

With spring training in full swing and regular season baseball just around the corner, Craig can't resist another analogy for his new path. "The best part is being able to almost start over. Comparing it to sports, you've got a pitcher who had a Cy Young season and now he's a free agent," he says. "He has an opportunity to do great things with a new team if he wants to, and I feel like that. I was a free agent and I got picked up by a winning team, and that's the best part. Knowing that if it's going to happen, we can do it. This is the best shot anybody can have. If we can't do it, it can't be done."

In this case, it could very well be a home run. **CW**

[ON TOUR]

KENNY CHESNEY

The Big Revival Tour

Opening Acts: Brantley Gilbert, Old Dominion, Jake Owen, Chase Rice and Cole Swindell

March 26-27

Nashville
Bridgestone
Arena

March 28

Columbia, S.C.
Colonial Life
Arena

April 8

Greenville, S.C.
Bon Secours
Wellness
Arena

April 9

Birmingham, Ala.
Legacy Arena at
the BJCC

April 11

**Fort Lauderdale,
Fla.**
Tortuga Music
Festival

April 16

Greensboro, N.C.
Greensboro
Coliseum

April 17

Louisville, Ky.
KFC Yum! Center

April 23

Albany, N.Y.
Times Union
Center

April 24-25

Uncasville, Conn.
Mohegan Sun
Arena

April 29

Glendale, Ariz.
Jobing.com
Arena

May 2

Santa Clara, Calif.
Levi's Stadium

May 6

St. Louis
Scottrade Center

May 7

Des Moines, Iowa
Wells Fargo
Arena

May 9

Indianapolis
Lucas Oil
Stadium

May 14

Tulsa, Okla.
BOK Center

May 16

Arlington, Texas
AT&T Stadium

May 21

Austin, Texas
Austin 360
Amphitheater



June 18

Sioux Falls, S.D.
Denny Sanford
Premier Center

June 20

Green Bay, Wis.
Lambeau Field

June 21

Columbus, Ohio
Ohio Country
Superfest

June 25

**Vancouver, British
Columbia**
Ambleside Park

June 27

Seattle
CenturyLink Field

July 8

Canandaigua, N.Y.
CMAC

July 9

Cleveland
Quicken
Loans Arena

July 11

Philadelphia
Lincoln
Financial Field

July 16

Lincoln, Neb.
Pinnacle Bank
Arena

July 18-19

Minneapolis
Target Field

July 22

Lake Tahoe, Calif.
Lake Tahoe Outdoor
Arena at Harveys

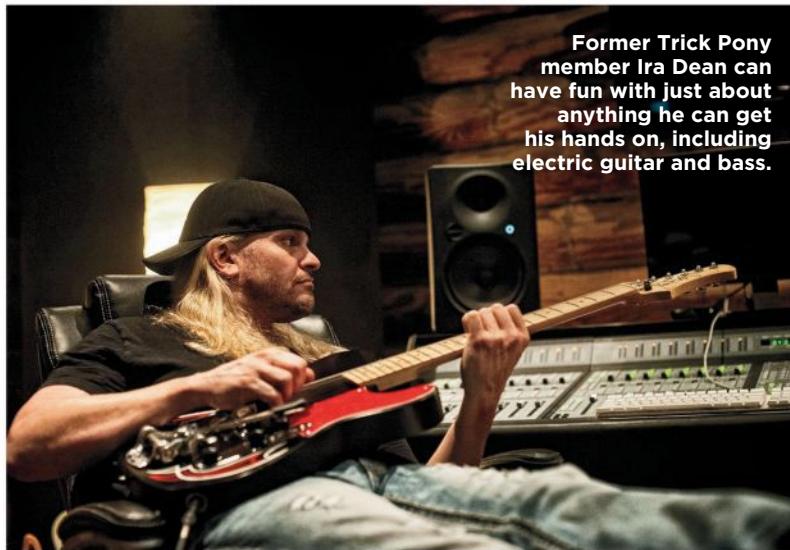
July 23

Fresno, Calif.
Save Mart Center

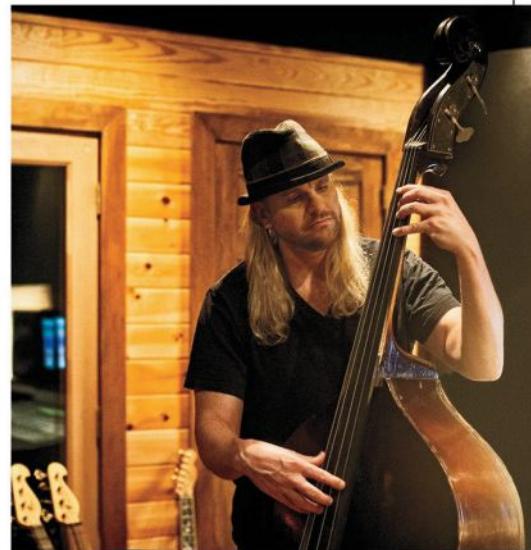
THE BOYS ROUND HERE



FORMER **TRICK**
PONY BASSIST
IRA DEAN
LIBERATES
HIMSELF FROM
HIS OLD GROUP
WITH A
COLLABORATIVE
NEW SINGLE.



Former Trick Pony member Ira Dean can have fun with just about anything he can get his hands on, including electric guitar and bass.



LAST SPRING, BASSIST IRA DEAN

was helping plan a reunion tour with his old group Trick Pony as well as producing the trio's new music, when the rug was pulled out from under him.

"I put a lot of work into that project," Ira tells *Country Weekly*. "We had gone into the studio and cut half of a record, and it was awesome. But unfortunately, they decided to go on without me, and that's fine."

Rather than looking at it as a setback, Ira used his suddenly wide-open calendar to be creative in the comfort of his own studio, just a stone's throw from his house outside Nashville.

During that time, Ira came across a George Harrison documentary that spotlighted the Traveling Wilburys, a supergroup comprised of the late Beatles member, Tom Petty, Bob Dylan, Roy Orbison and Electric Light Orchestra's Jeff Lynne. It got Ira thinking that country music was missing that kind of grouping. He felt that he had the perfect song to use for such a collaboration in "Nothin' to Do Round Here," which he co-wrote with Jeffrey Steele and Shane Minor. Ira reached for his phone and called some of his friends, including Jeffrey, Ronnie Milsap and Lee Roy Parnell, to see who would be into the idea.

"I wanted all my friends to play



on it, and it just continued to grow," explains Ira, who also added Montgomery Gentry to the mix. "Next thing I know, Colt Ford heard it and he was like, 'Why didn't you ask me?' He did his thing and e-mailed me back the track. It turned out even better than I was thinking!"

"Nothin' to Do Round Here," which was picked up by SiriusXM's The Highway in February, proved to be a catalyst for Ira to record some of the songs he had written over the past six months. In addition to playing bass, Dobro and percussion, Ira also provided acoustic and electric guitars, banjo, drums and piano, and engineered most of the project. "Slowly but surely, it evolved into 16-hour days," Ira says with laughter. "My studio was going until three in the morning with people coming over and playing. It was awesome!"

Before he knew it, Ira had enough songs for an entire album. "I wasn't even thinking about cutting an album; I was just cutting songs that I liked," Ira explains of the forthcoming *It's About Time*, which will be released to iTunes. "I was just having fun. It was like we threw a party in the studio, and we just never left for six months. We were just creating music, having fun, cutting up and covering new ground. We weren't thinking about a record label. We weren't thinking about radio. We were just having fun. It was like we were playing in some garage somewhere but somebody pressed [record] and we just polished it up!"

Reflecting on last April when the Trick Pony kerfuffle left him temporarily stunned, Ira emerged from the ordeal with a creative happiness and freedom he had never known. "That whole deal allowed me to have time to make a record where there were no restrictions," notes Ira. "There was nobody telling me what to do or what to cut. The result turned out to be a true representation of myself. I am so proud of it. It's amazing how not everything happens the way you want it to, but in the end, it always seems to work out just right. It's a great place to be."

— ALANNA CONAWAY

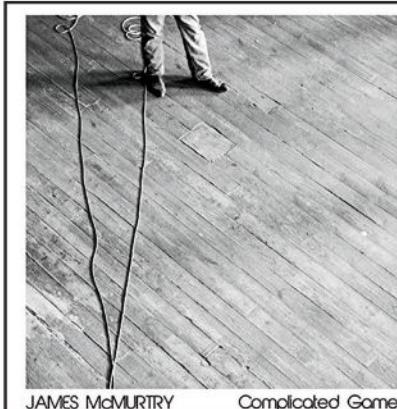
CHARACTER STUDY

James McMurtry shines a light on work and worry with his stripped-down new album.



WRITING POLITICAL SONGS is an eternally tricky proposition: miss the mark and you'll suffer the harshest of critics' barbs, or do too good of a job and suddenly that's what people expect of you. That's kind of what happened to veteran singer/songwriter James McMurtry after his song "We Can't Make It Here" gave voice to the exhausted desperation of the multitudes of people struggling through the mid-2000s.

"After that happened, I was supposed to be the political songwriter," says James with a sigh, calling from his home base in Austin. "I don't mind trying, but it's a very small percentage of what I've written. I do pretty often work social commentary, just weave it into the song, so that I'm trying to get some reality in there, but I'm not getting on a soapbox to the point where it turns into a sermon



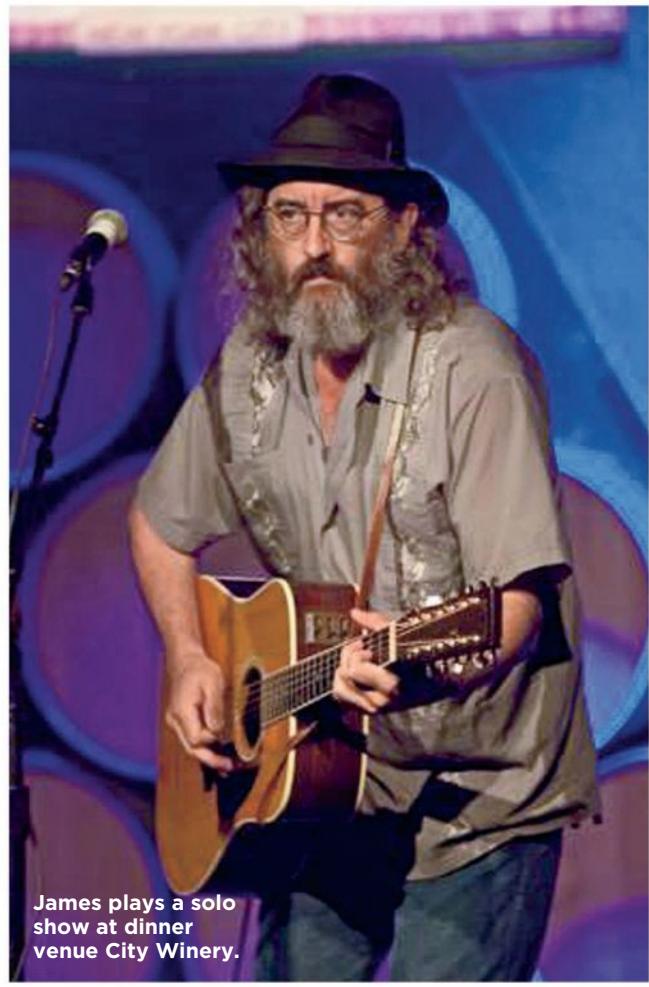
JAMES MCMURTRY *Complicated Game*

and everybody stops listening."

You'll find much more of the social commentary on James' new album, *Complicated Game*, his first album for the Complicated Game imprint ("I was just trying to fool people into thinking I owned the label," he jokes) and first studio effort since 2008's *Just Us Kids*. Rather than overt politi-

cal messages, James opts for narratives detailing the struggles of working people, like the mom-and-pop store owner in the meditative "Copper Canteen" or the weather-hardened fishermen in "Carlisle's Haul." They're songs that demand attention and careful listening to understand.

"I think a lot of people have been looking for that from me for a while now," explains James, who scaled back from his usual rock-tinged production for *Complicated Game*. "I do a lot more solo work than I used to because it gets to where we run out of road. We run out of routing dates for the band because we'll use up all the neighboring states. There comes a point when I have to get on a plane by myself or with a road manager and just fly out and rent a car and do solo dates for a while. I do a lot more solos and there are people that come



James plays a solo show at dinner venue City Winery.

to the solo shows that don't come to the band shows and vice versa. It's like having a different market."

James recorded the album primarily in New Orleans with the help of producers CC Adcock and Mike Napolitano. This was a big departure for James, considering he has served as his own producer for his previous five albums. "I'd pretty much run out of tricks," he admits. "Everything I learned from [John] Mellencamp and Lloyd Maines, and all those other guys, I was repeating myself. It was really time to bring in a producer."

The resulting collection is decidedly less amped up than *Just Us Kids* or 2005's *Childish Things*, the album that features "We Can't Make It Here." It was also a pretty far cry from the '90s country rock that put him on the map in Nashville, Austin and beyond.

"They like it real clean," explains James of working with CC and Mike. "It's fairly tedious. I'd go in and do the vocal and guitar thing, and then I'd replace guitar and then I'd replace vocal and keep going until I had no bleed on anything. [It] gives many, many options in the mix, which is nice. It has a cleaner, high-res feel to it."

The album's first single, the half-sung, half-spoken "How'm I Gonna Find You Now," deviates from that slightly by having a funky drumbeat and a dirty electric guitar tone to augment the story. And the single mix by Tchad Blake is even more dirty, sounding like something alternative hero Beck might have done in his mad scientist '90s heyday.

"It wasn't going to fit with the rest of the record, because the rest of the record is not as crunchy," says James.

"They just picked that as a single and sent it to Tchad just to see what would happen, and everybody loved the mix but we didn't think we could use it on the record so we remixed the song for the record."

Either way, it has that literary quality that draws people to James' work. The songs on *Complicated Game* follow in a similar vein, more illustrations of others' lives than close-to-the-bone personal statement. And like a student of literature, James diligently lets his characters act and behave as themselves. Tough as it is, that even means letting them have their own politics apart from his.

"My job is to write the song, so I try to write the song whether I agree with the character or not," he says. "It's usually better if you stay in character."

— JON FREEMAN

[REVIEWS]



ALBUMS

LUKE BRYAN

Spring Break . . . Checkin' Out

CAPITOL RECORDS NASHVILLE

GRADE: C+

Luke bids farewell to the spring break sessions with an 11-pack of five new songs and the six from last year's party opus. The five originals revolve around—you guessed it—spring break, which these days appears to be little more than a publicly endorsed weekend of binge drinking, overspending and essentially displaying the morals of a mongoose. There is nothing remotely timeless about them—they'll stay with you about as long as a typical spring break fling. Of course, timelessness is hardly the point. The songs are meant to speak to the moment, and

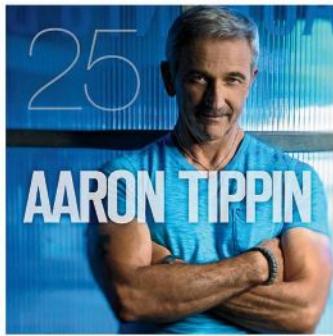


the lyrics, chock-full of beach and drinking references, reflect that. And of the originals, only "Games" has any real meat to it. Luke ably sums up the frustration people have with constant game-players who won't be upfront with others, and it marks a cool departure from the rest of the project. "Checkin' Out"

actually starts out with a riff mindful of Marvin Gaye's "Ain't That Peculiar," but doesn't maintain any momentum from there. "Spring Breakdown," an unfortunate title if ever one existed (talk about stretching a metaphor), is obviously intended as Luke's spring break concert closer, a goodbye to spring break and all its revelry while also serving as a thank-you to the fans who show up every year. What's to be admired here is the production, which allows Luke plenty of space to operate. The tunes are infused with banjos, B3s and other instruments without sounding cluttered. It's nicely done, but you would hope for better material.

— BOB PAXMAN

AT A GLANCE: Spring Break Lite.



AARON TIPPIN

25

NIPPIT RECORDS

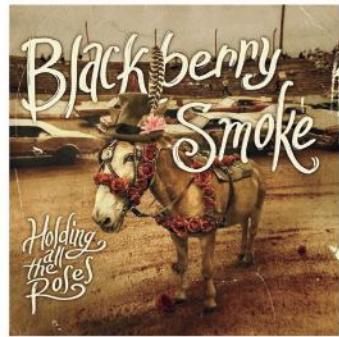
GRADE: B

The '90s were arguably one of the most fun decades in country music. The melding of traditional and contemporary reached a zenith of goodness with artists like Aaron Tippin at the forefront. The best part is that Aaron has remained active and he has released a new project, 25. The double-disc collection includes 10 of his biggest fan favorites, including "There Ain't Nothin' Wrong With the Radio" and "Where the Stars and Stripes and the Eagle Fly."

And the second disc is a melting pot of goodness. Tracks like "Working Girl" and "Free to Be Me" are the essence of what made Aaron a force in the '90s, but they've been given more contemporary production, making them relevant in today's market. But then the "Kiss This" singer goes retro with songs like "On This Side of Life" and "That Makes Me Thirsty," which boast über-traditional arrangements riddled with fiddle and honest lyrics of faith, family and . . . well . . . being thirsty. Covers of The Georgia Satellites' "Keep Your Hands to Yourself" and Al Green's "Let's Stay Together" are just plain fun, but it's his remarkable remake of the standard "The Way You Look Tonight" that blows the doors off.

The repeated gunshot kick drum seems a little monotonous on an album that is, otherwise, full of diversity and talent, but we're happy to overlook it just to have Aaron on the radio. — **TAMMY RAGUSA**

AT A GLANCE: We'll take another 25, please!



BLACKBERRY SMOKE

Holding All the Roses

ROUNDER RECORDS

GRADE: A

Over the past 15 years, Atlanta-based quintet Blackberry Smoke has been slow-smoking their way to perfection, playing more than 250 shows a year. Along the way, they've released three studio albums, one live album and two EPs. With their latest studio release,

Holding All the Roses, Blackberry Smoke is finished smoldering—they're on fire. The 12-song set is stacked to the gills with riff-oriented offerings like down-home bangers "Let Me Help You (Find the Door)" and the title track, but things really start catching fire when the Southern rockers' keen melodic sensibilities shine through on tracks such as "Living in the Song" and "Lay It All on Me," which seamlessly melds the ivory tickling and steel. The boys slow it on down with the sweet lil' ethereal ballad "Woman on the Moon," and overcome the slight hiccup "Wish in One Hand," which grooves but falls short lyrically, before closing the album with the funky riff-tastic rocker "Fire in the Hole." *Holding All the Roses* will make you believe that '70s Southern rock is alive and well. — **JIM CASEY**

AT A GLANCE: Where there's smoke, there's fire.

GRADES: A OUTSTANDING | B ABOVE AVERAGE | C AVERAGE | D BELOW AVERAGE | F #FAIL

A screenshot of the Country Weekly website. The header features the magazine's name and a search bar. Below the header, there's a main article about Jake Hearn and a sidebar with various news snippets and links. The right side of the page has a sidebar for 'TURN ON YOUR RADIO!' with a 'COUNTRY WEEKLY ON AIR' section, and a 'Country Stars on Twitter' section.

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ON THE EDGE

Spotlighting artists who reside on the fringes of country music



FEUFOLETT

(From left) Philippe Billeaudoux, Michael Stafford, Kelli Jones-Savoy, Andrew Toups and Chris Stafford

FOR FANS OF:
Beausoleil, D.L. Menard,
Jimmy C. Newman

FOLK TRADITIONS IN MUSIC

can be a double-edged sword. For Lafayette, La., group Feufollet (pronounced *foh-fuh-lay*), the unique culture of French Cajun Louisiana has been a way for its members to explore and celebrate their heritage. Simultaneously, those same traditions can often feel so rigid and confining as to prevent breaking new ground.

Bearing that in mind, Feufollet's new album, *Two Universes*, is a conscious step away from the accordion-driven instrumentals and exclusively French-language tunes of their previous albums. Singer/songwriter Kelli Jones-Savoy has joined the group, and she brings a distinctly country feel to the lead single, "Tired of Your Tears," and bandleader/multi-instrumentalist Chris Stafford's English-language title track masterfully blends a classic country waltz with Cajun-style fiddle and accordion.

"English is my first language, it's easier to express myself," says Chris, who grew up speaking fluent French as part of his school's French immer-

sion program. "The music here served more as dance music. It's made to have a specific beat and people know these folk dances that go with it. So you can be very constrained trying to write within that style. [But] I do also write songs in French."

For example, "Cette Fois," which sounds like a lively two-step dance hall number, though listeners might take until the chorus to realize that Kelli isn't singing in English. Not understanding the lyrics isn't an impediment to enjoying this band: the Cajun-tinted music jumps from country to swamp pop to Beatles-esque rock to Americana, but the focus is always squarely on songwriting.

"It was like, maybe we can make this record focus more on the songs, and our Cajun influences and background can inform the production of these songs," explains Chris.

In this way, Feufollet is not unlike artists who broke from their Appalachian upbringing to push bluegrass and country music into exciting new places. The best are able to hang on to those traditions that shaped them—particularly important in the disappearing Cajun culture—but add their own modern spin.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING:

- "Tired of Your Tears"
- "Redlight"
- "Cette Fois"
- "Two Universes"

All songs from *Two Universes*. For more info, please visit feufollet.net.



"Most of what bands play day to day in this style is all older songs that are covered over and over again, just traditional stuff," says Chris. "The statement we're trying to make is, we have something to contribute to this."

— JON FREEMAN

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JOHN WAYNE

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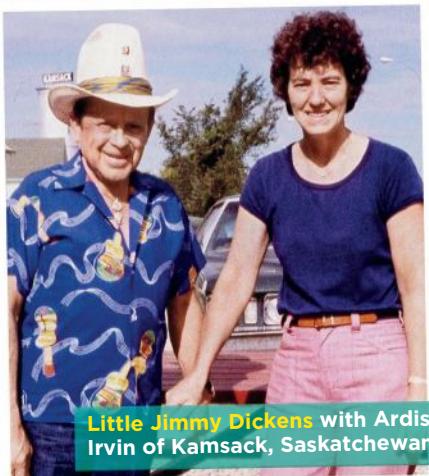
→ Country Weekly readers rub elbows with their favorite stars . . .



Jason Aldean with Lauren Hardee of Conway, S.C.



Loretta Lynn with Millie Yarbrough of Walnut Cove, N.C.



Little Jimmy Dickens with Ardis Irvin of Kamsack, Saskatchewan



Gloriana with Sheryl and Jim Ziobro of Duryea, Pa.



Korbin Little of Lincolnton, N.C., with Cole Swindell



Florida Georgia Line's Tyler Hubbard with Tyler Peterson of Nashville

WANT YOUR FAN PHOTO PUBLISHED IN COUNTRY WEEKLY?

Send photos to Stars Up Close, Country Weekly, 506 2nd Avenue South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210, or submit online (no duplicate submissions, please) at CountryWeekly.com/fanphotos. Be sure to include the name, hometown and state of each person pictured. Publication is not guaranteed; photos cannot be returned.

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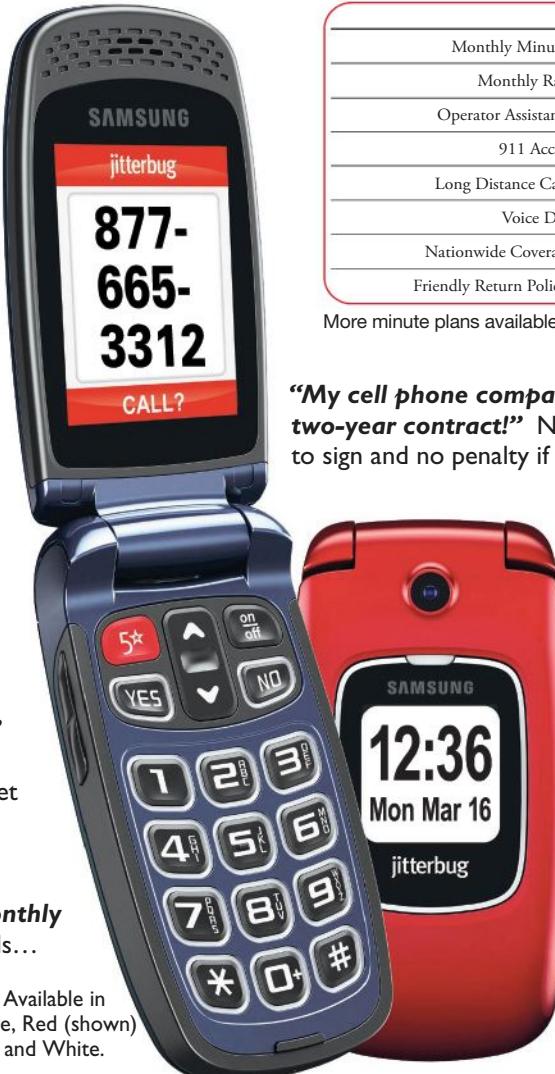
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FLASHBACK

THIS WEEK IN COUNTRY



The Grand Ole Opry christened its new home, the Grand Ole

Opry House, with a spectacular show of surprises and special

RANDY TRAVIS took home a pair of prestigious honors at the 23rd annual Academy of Country Music Awards, held March 21, 1988, at Knott's Berry Farm in California. Randy repeated as Top Male Vocalist of the Year and also earned a victory in the Single Record of the Year category for his No. 1 song "Forever and Ever, Amen." But it was also a big night for the show's co-hosts, **HANK WILLIAMS JR.** and **REBA McENTIRE**. Hank Jr. won Entertainer of the Year for the second consecutive time while Reba scored a victory for Top Female Vocalist of the Year.

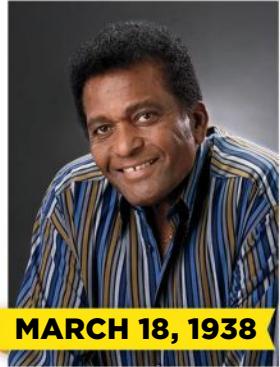
MARCH 21, 1988



TIM McGRAW released the fifth and final single, "Watch the Wind Blow By," from his *Tim McGraw and the Dancehall Doctors* album in October 2003. And like many of Tim's singles, it blew away the competition. The song, written by Anders Osborne and Dylan Altman, reached the top of the country charts on March 20, 2004. It became Tim's 18th chart-topping single, tying him at 20th place with Crystal Gayle and Earl Thomas Conley on the all-time list of most No. 1 country hits in history.

To read more on Roy Acuff, go to CountryWeekly.com/magazine/vault

BIRTHDAYS



MARCH 18, 1938

CHARLEY PRIDE

is one of country music's most accomplished artists. Born in Sledge, Miss., Charley scored 29 No. 1 singles during his career, placing him sixth on the all-time list, won the CMA Entertainer of the Year award in 1971 and was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000.

MARCH 16, 1951
RAY BENSON
of *Asleep at the Wheel*

MARCH 17, 1955
PAUL OVERSTREET

MARCH 17, 1973
KEIFER THOMPSON
of *Thompson Square*

MARCH 18, 1974
PHILLIP SWEET
of *Little Big Town*

MARCH 18, 1974
JARON LOWENSTEIN
of *Jaron and the Long Road to Love*

MARCH 20, 1946
"RANGER DOUG" GREEN
of *Riders in the Sky*

MARCH 20, 1954
JIM SEALES
of *Shenandoah*

“Michael: Triumphant Warrior”

Masterpiece Bronze Sculpture

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Howard David Johnson's Renaissance-inspired artwork adorns the Archangel's wings

www.bradfordexchange.com/michael

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Shown smaller than actual size of about 10 inches high

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CHARTS

WEEK ENDING MARCH 7, 2015

ALBUMS		
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	—	THE UNDERDOG AARON WATSON
2	2	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
3	—	TERRAPLANE STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES
4	3	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
5	—	MONO THE MAVERICKS
6	4	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
7	6	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
8	7	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
9	15	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
10	5	PLATINUM MIRANDA LAMBERT
11	9	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
12	1	HOLDING ALL THE ROSES BLACKBERRY SMOKE
13	8	MAN AGAINST MACHINE GARTH BROOKS
14	14	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
15	12	GREATEST HITS SO FAR . . . ZAC BROWN BAND
16	13	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
17	19	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
18	11	THE COWBOY RIDES AWAY: LIVE FROM AT&T STADIUM • GEORGE STRAIT
19	21	METAMODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY MUSIC STURGILL SIMPSON
20	—	GLEN CAMPBELL: I'LL BE ME SOUNDTRACK
21	10	HAPPY PRISONER: THE BLUEGRASS SESSIONS ROBERT EARL KEEN
22	16	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
23	20	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
24	18	I DON'T DANCE LEE BRICE
25	17	SUNDOWN HEAVEN TOWN TIM McGRAW

SINGLES		
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
2	4	LONELY TONIGHT BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
3	5	LIKE A COWBOY RANDY Houser
4	7	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDREDGE
5	6	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
6	1	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
7	3	I SEE YOU LUKE BRYAN
8	8	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
9	9	HOMEgrown HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
10	12	AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY COLE SWINDELL
11	11	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
12	10	TAKE IT ON BACK CHASE BRYANT
13	13	HOMEgrown ZAC BROWN BAND
14	14	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
15	15	SAY YOU DO DIERKS BENTLEY
16	16	WHAT WE AIN'T GOT JAKE OWEN
17	20	RAISE 'EM UP KEITH URBAN FEATURING ERIC CHURCH
18	18	A GUY WALKS INTO A BAR TYLER FARR
19	19	SMOKE A THOUSAND HORSES
20	17	FREESTYLE LADY ANTEBELLUM
21	22	LITTLE RED WAGON MIRANDA LAMBERT
22	23	SHE DON'T LOVE YOU ERIC PAISLEY
23	24	DON'T IT BILLY CURRINGTON
24	25	BABY BE MY LOVE SONG EASTON CORBIN
25	26	WILD CHILD KENNY CHESNEY WITH GRACE POTTER
26	27	DIAMOND RINGS AND OLD BARSTOOLS TIM McGRAW WITH CATHERINE DUNN
27	28	HARD TO BE COOL JOE NICHOLS
28	30	LOVE YOU LIKE THAT CANAAN SMITH
29	31	LOVE ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT KELSEA BALLERINI
30	32	LAY LOW JOSH TURNER



Kenny Chesney's No. 1 video captures him in a 2014 performance at the Georgia Theatre in Athens.

CMT VIDEOS		
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	TIL IT'S GONE KENNY CHESNEY
2	3	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
3	4	LONELY TONIGHT - BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
4	6	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
5	5	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDREDGE
6	8	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
7	1	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
8	9	HOMEgrown HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
9	11	TAKE IT ON BACK CHASE BRYANT
10	12	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG

SOURCE: CMT



Carrie Underwood reunited with "Two Black Cadillacs" director P.R. Brown for her new clip, at No. 10.

GAC VIDEOS		
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	3	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
2	2	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
3	3	LONELY TONIGHT - BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
4	5	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
5	8	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
6	4	GENTLE ON MY MIND THE BAND PERRY
7	6	LAY LOW JOSH TURNER
8	11	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
9	9	DON'T IT BILLY CURRINGTON
10	13	LITTLE TOY GUNS CARRIE UNDERWOOD

SOURCE: GAC

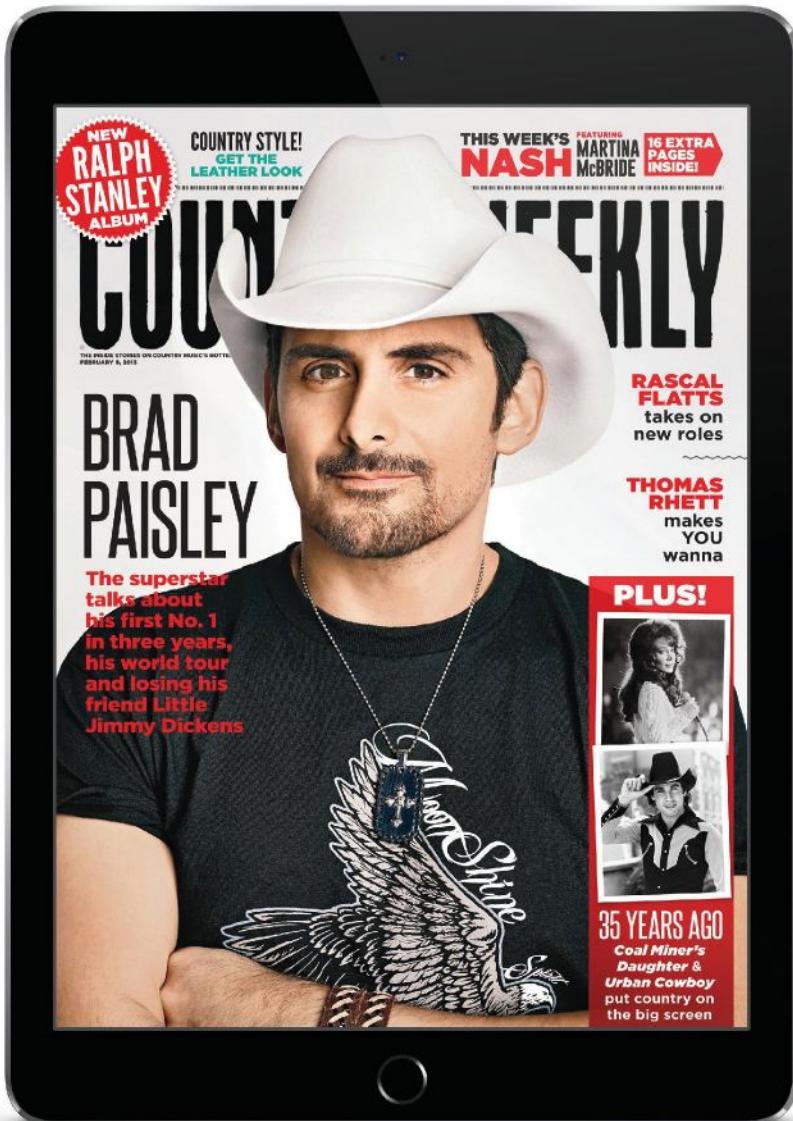
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Title Twister

When songs end up at the top of *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart, they need to be duly recognized. Listed below are 10 recent chart-toppers. But they can't begin to be recognized if the titles are all twisted up. Can you untwist them?

1. LTEADGLAA



ERIC CHURCH

2. TLI TSI ENOG

3. CPTEFRE RMSOT



BRAD PAISLEY

4. THUNSOG EDIRR

5. IRLG NI A RNYTOUC GSNO



MADDIE & TAE

6. I ESE OYU

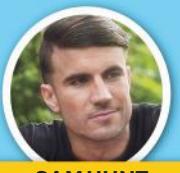
7. EEOHRWMES NI YM RCA



KEITH URBAN

8. RUNBNI TI WOND

9. EEVAL HTE GTHNI NO



SAM HUNT

10. ENON GLTIH

Answers: 1. "Talladega"; 2. "Till It's Gone"; 3. "Perfect Storm"; 4. "Shoutin' It Down"; 5. "Girl in a Country Song"; 6. "See You"; 7. "Somewhere in My Car"; 8. "Burnin' It Down"; 9. "Leave the Night On"; 10. "Neon Light".

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 M U T T N A T I O N L Y P R E T T I E R
 T I S H O M I N G O O K E R O S E N E F

ANGALEENA PRESLEY
 ASHLEY MONROE
 AUTOMATIC
 BAGGAGE CLAIM
 BLAKE SHELTON
 CAUSE FOR THE PAWS
 CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND
 DAD RICK
 FEMALE VOCALIST
 AWARDS
 GRAMMYS
 GUNPOWDER AND LEAD

HEART LIKE MINE
 KEROSENE
 LADYSMITH
 LINDALE, TX
 LITTLE RED WAGON
 MAMA'S BROKEN
 HEART
 MOM BEVERLY
 MUTTNATION
 NASHVILLE STAR
 ONLY PRETTIER
 OVER YOU

PEDIGREE
 PISTOL ANNIES
 PLATINUM
 REDEMPTION RANCH
 REVOLUTION
 SOMETHIN' BAD
 THE HOUSE THAT
 BUILT ME
 TISHOMINGO, OK
 WE WERE US
 WHITE LIAR



Find the words, titles and phrases in this wordsearch challenge submitted by **Samantha Robertson** of **Johnsonville, IL**. NOTE—they may appear vertically, horizontally, diagonally, backward or forward. Good luck!

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Expertly crafted and detailed, this Elsa collectible is authentic to the character, from her ice queen couture and the sculpted snowflake she holds sparkling with Swarovski gems, to her mesmerizing voice. Idina Menzel sings a portion of her Oscar®-winning song to warm your heart again and again!

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This doll is not

a toy, but a fine collectible.

Doll stand and batteries included.

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FILL IN THE BLANKS

with RANDY HOUSER

I like it when ...

My song goes No. 1.

My favorite TV show is ...

Justified.

My favorite color is ...

Green.

If I could be anyone for a day it would

be ...

Jesus.

If I could change one thing about

myself it would be ...

Slow down my pace.

A guy can never have too many ...

Friends and family.

I can't live without ...

Jesus.

I wish I were ...

On an island somewhere.

I would love to do
a duet with ...

Rihanna. →



The one word that
describes my day
today is ...

Busy.

The first thing I do in the morning is ...

Pee.

Music is ...

Life.

I think that _____ suck.

Crappy people.



RANDY COURTESY EBMEDIA; RIHANNA BY KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

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THE
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OF THE
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OF
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